

# **Team emotional intelligence in multicultural teams**

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<p>Team culture may serve as a unifying element among culturally diverse team members. It can be defined as a set of values and norms, which the team members agree on, respect, follow and believe in. Likewise, team emotional intelligence (later TEI) can also be approached as team culture.</p> <p>The objective of the study was to open up the phenomenon of TEI through the TEI model developed by Druskat and Wolff, understand the role of TEI and its perceived meaning as well as see how TEI was visible in multicultural teams. Despite the use of a concrete model, the study aimed at viewing the phenomenon in a holistic way: social meanings were fully constructed by the research participants.</p> <p>The study applied qualitative research methods and was abductive in its nature. Structured interview was employed as a data collection method, which was considered a qualitative method since open-ended responses were received. Six team members participated in the research. Three team members represented a multicultural team in an IT company, and the three other interviewees were teammates in another multicultural sales team.</p> <p>The findings of the study revealed that some TEI facets were perceived by the team members as more relevant and important for teamwork than the other facets. Additionally, some facets were embodied in a different way from what the TEI model suggested. Apparently, both teams developed their own team cultures, which partly included TEI norms. Presumably, these already developed team cultures served the needs of the teams to some extent since no major matters related to cultural diversity appeared. The research, however, did not address the issue of teamwork efficiency. Thus, it was impossible to understand whether cultural diversity was addressed in the most optimal way to benefit from it.</p>		
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Miscellaneous		

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 The research background

The current research focused on the phenomenon of team emotional intelligence (later TEI) and its role as team culture in multicultural teams. The aim of the thesis was to open up the phenomenon through the model of TEI developed by Druskat and Wolff (2001) and to see how TEI was perceived and occurred in multicultural teams. Despite the usage of a concrete model, the study aimed at viewing the phenomenon in a holistic way: social meanings were constructed by the research participants.

Communication, understanding, mutual respect and trust can be considered the basis for effective teamwork (Center for Management and Organization Effectiveness 2017). All these elements are important in both homogeneous and culturally diverse teams. However, when teamwork happens in a multicultural context, the process of building the basis for a successful teamwork becomes more challenging. Team members with culturally diverse backgrounds may tend to see a team, its target and activities from various perspectives; thus, the team's tasks (responsibilities of team members, the way how decisions are made etc.) and processes (participation, conflict resolutions, team evaluation etc.) may be understood in versatile ways (Ochieng & Price 2009, 529). In accordance to Hofstede's initial research, almost 80 per cent of the dissimilarities in the ways how persons act in terms of the attitudes that they have at the workplace are affected by their national cultures (ibid.). One could ask, if there is there any kind of formula, that could make teamwork in culturally diverse teams effective? The answer is: possibly, because there exists an alternative to it, and it is called team culture.

Team culture can serve as a unifying element among different team members. It can be considered one common set of values and norms, which the team members agree on, respect, follow and believe in. Various researchers (Early & Mosakowski 2000; Fruchter & Townsend 2003; Govindarajan & Gupta 2001; Sağ, Kaynak & Sezen 2016) agree that team culture in multicultural teams helps to build a bridge among culturally different team members.

Sağ, Kaynak and Sezen's research (2016) on multicultural teams' performance shows that team culture may also be affected by versatile factors. Among different factors, the organizational factor (including organizational structure and culture) also influences team culture in some way. Gordon (2010, 28) mentions that organizations need to be very attentive to culture as such and compares culture to the roots of a tree that give energy for the fruit to appear: "...For great fruit, you must nurture the root. You must focus on creating a culture that will deliver the outcomes and fruit you want. Sure, you have to measure sales, costs, and outcomes, but these are merely a byproduct of your culture, teamwork, productivity, and performance".

It also needs to be admitted, that, in principle, a team can work and reach some outcomes without necessarily forming and accepting the norms of TEI, for example. However, the existence of a constructive team culture contributes positively to cohesive teamwork with improved efficiency, and creativity. Following Gordon's (2010) suggestion team culture can be compared to the roots of a tree and the results of teamwork can be regarded as fruit.

The author of the thesis was unable to find any similar qualitative studies, focusing on team culture in the form of TEI in multicultural teams. Some previous qualitative research covered the theme of TEI and team effectiveness (Peltola 2016).

## 1.2 Research motivation

The chosen thesis topic could be considered relevant to the society and a wide range of organizations operating in different industries since, nowadays, cultural diversity and teamwork are often blended together. Sometimes cultural diversity becomes challenging to handle, and a unifying team culture could become a key to approaching the multicultural team. Team culture in a team has a significant meaning in the attempts to overcome difficulties and keep the team integral and effective.

The current research was not linked to any particular company, and it was conducted by interviewing several people, who had experience in working in culturally diverse teams. Three persons represented one team and worked together in one team from seven to ten years in an IT company. The other three persons worked together in

another team in a manufacturing company and had common teamwork experience between one – and three years.

The author of the thesis has gained some experience in culturally diverse teams both through studying and working. Being initially interested in the theme of emotional intelligence and multicultural teams, she thought how various emotional intelligence profiles of culturally diverse team members could be combined. Having become acquainted with versatile literature materials, the author encountered the team emotional intelligence (TEI) model by Druskat and Wolff (2001). The author became motivated to learn more about what TEI is and how it may appear in real multicultural teams.

### 1.3 Research questions

The research focused on understanding TEI's role as team culture and its embodiment in multicultural teams. The qualitative approach was chosen for collecting and analyzing the data. The data was gained from interviews with persons who had obtained work experience in multicultural teams. The employed interview type can be defined as structured interview with nine guiding themes. This was based on the fact that the model of TEI by Druskat and Wolff (2001) is comprised of these facets. The research question with two sub-questions was formed based on the existing literature.

*Research question:* What is the role and perceived meaning of team emotional intelligence in multicultural teams?

Sub-questions:

- What do team members think about team emotional intelligence in teamwork?
- How does team emotional intelligence appear in multicultural teams?

The current study can be defined as abductive research since it has both deductive and inductive features. The research and interview questions were formulated deductively, whereas the data analysis also employed the inductive approach. The themes were already coined from the model, but the sub-themes emerged from the



data. The data was analyzed using the content analysis method (thematic analysis), and each theme was illustrated with a thematic network.

## 1.4 Structure of the thesis

The present thesis is comprised of five chapters including an introduction, a literature review, a methodology chapter, the results part and a discussion. The introduction chapter aims at explaining the challenges in multicultural teams and showing the importance of team culture creation in culturally diverse teams. Chapter 2 (literature review) discusses the definition of a multicultural team, provides the main challenges that team members in multicultural teams may face and gives insights how these challenges may be understood through the cultural frameworks of Hall, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, and Hofstede. Additionally, the literature review chapter covers team culture and focuses on the TEI model. Chapter 3 (methodology) explains why the qualitative approach was chosen, gives details on the employed methods, data collection and data analysis. Chapter 4 (results) provides the findings of the data analysis, answers the research questions and explains how the results were verified. The findings are also supported with thematic networks. Chapter 5 (discussion) consists of the final conclusions, discusses the limitations of the study and gives recommendations for future research.

## 2 Multicultural teams and team culture

### 2.1 Multicultural teams

#### *2.1.1 Impact of cultural diversity on teams*

People naturally become more diverse due to changing demographic patterns and work practices (Mazur 2010, 5). Teamwork has become a common work practice since companies try to boost results and make the employees more committed (Gardenswartz & Rowe 2003, 17). Different company operations are dependent on teams. Thus, it becomes highly important that team members are aligned with each other and have common "mental models". Both of these conditions are of vital relevance for a team since they make a team learn and achieve the goal (Yeager & Nafukho 2012, 390.).

Lencioni (2002, vii) emphasizes that teams, however, are “inherently dysfunctional” by nature since they are comprised of humans. Diversity makes the team processes even more complex (Schellwies 2015, 14). Thus, the cultural diversity of team members may bring both positive and negative effects to the whole teams (Stahl, Maznevski, Voigt, & Jonsen 2009, 2).

Kamal and Ferdousi (2009, 159) refer to Zillar (1972), Hayles and Robert (1982) who state that when diversity is addressed properly, it may be beneficial for an organization since creativity is more likely to develop, and solutions to problems may be found in versatile ways in these teams. On the other hand, if not addressed properly, diversity may become a barrier that impedes progress (Mazur 2010, 5).

### 2.1.2 Definition of a multicultural team

Multicultural teams can be defined in multiple ways. Three definitions of multicultural teams are given and discussed below.

*A collection of individuals with different cultural backgrounds, who are interdependent in their tasks, who share responsibilities for outcomes, who see themselves and are seen by others as an intact social entity embedded in one or more larger social systems, and who manage their relationships across organizational boundaries and beyond (Tirmizi 2008, 5).*

Tirmizi (2008, 5) indicates that this definition is naturally derived from the definitions of Marquardt and Horvath (2001), and Bailey and Cohen (1997). The multicultural team definition given by Tirmizi (2008) puts the emphasis on versatile cultural backgrounds of the team members, their task interdependence, contribution to the fulfillment of the common goal and essence of social entity. Apart from that, a team as a unit builds its own relations with different internal and external stakeholders.

The first element in Tirmizi’s definition (2008) is the cultural background, which may be formulated as follows: “the context of one’s experience as shaped by membership in groups”, which have some characteristics such as ethnical, religious, linguistic and many others (International Reading Association 2010, 86). Thus, cultural background is not the direct synonym of ethnicity or nationality and it is wider in its meaning.

The second element in the definition is task interdependence. Saavedra, Early and Van Dyne (1993, 61) refer to Georgopoulos (1986) and Kiggundu (1981, 1983) who

formulate task interdependence as the level of reliance between team members in the pursuit of tasks' accomplishment in an efficient way taking into account the team members' job descriptions. Saavedra and colleagues (*ibid.*, 62) indicate that in accordance to Thompson (1967), task interdependence can be of various types depending on the form in which resources or information are shared and exchanged. There are four types of task interdependence: pooled, sequential, reciprocal and the team tasks' interdependence. The level of needed interactions, coordination and information exchange varies among these types of task interdependency. Pooled tasks interdependence requires not so much communication, exchange of information and ideas whereas team tasks interdependence requires the highest level of interactions. (Saavedra et al. 1993, 62-63.)

The next element in Tirmizi's definition of multicultural teams (2008) is the "intact social entity". Anyonge, Jonckheere, Romano, and Gallina (2013, 13) refer to Das (2005) who gives the following definition of a social entity: "a structured group of two or more people brought together to achieve certain objectives". Thus, an intact social entity means a solid group that is working for achieving goals, and located in a bigger setting, i.e. a company or organization. The minimum size of such a group is two persons.

The last element in the definition is managing external relationships inside and outside of the teams' own organization since teams are mainly open systems that need to interact with other stakeholders (Gladstein & Caldwell 1986). Gladstein and Caldwell (1986, 1) indicate that the management of external relationships can also be called boundary management. This management is particularly important in the teams whose work outcomes are dependent on other resources (including knowledge or information) (*ibid.*). Additionally, boundary management facilitates work coordination and making decisions (*ibid.*, 3). It needs to be noted, though, that not all team members need to participate in forming relations with the other internal or external stakeholders. Sometimes it may be sufficient if a manager in a team takes this responsibility. This manager can be called a boundary manager. This manager handles boundary related matters, "managers work on the system, workers work in the system". (Escobar Marín, Liker, & Hanna 2015.)

The overall definition given by Tirmizi (2008) is multi-sided and complete and covers all the relevant aspects in relation to different cultural backgrounds and teamwork. Despite cultural diversity, multicultural teams embrace the main teamwork processes.

The next definition is given by Stahl, Mäkelä, Zander, and Maznevski (2010) as follows: “A group of people from different cultures, with a joint deliverable for the organization or another stakeholder” (439.).

The definition given by Stahl and colleagues concentrates on the team members who come from different cultures and who work together in order to reach one outcome for their own organization or some external entity. However, this definition does not use the term cultural background, and it formulates the meaning by mentioning “cultures”. Additionally the definition given by Stahl and others does not directly indicate tasks’ interdependence and points out common outcome that indeed implies tasks’ interdependence in some form. Taken together, this definition is shorter than that of Tirmizi but it covers all the basic features of multicultural teams.

The last definition that is discussed in this paper is that of Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003):

*“Teams, diverse or otherwise, are groups of people, preferably between 7 and 12 in number, who come together to achieve certain results or performance goals. The members are functionally interdependent and bring their individual knowledge and complementary skills to the task so that, individually and collectively, they yield the results for which they are held accountable” (22.).*

The definition given by Gardenswartz and Rowe does not place any special emphasis on cultural diversity, which means that all teams (both homogeneous and multicultural teams) have the same common features. Overall, this definition resembles that of Tirmizi, but two differences may be found. The first one is that it points out the optimal number of team members ranging from seven to twelve persons. The second difference is that this definition does not include the category of boundary management.

Having defined the meaning of multicultural teams, there is still a need to concentrate on some peculiarities, which occur in multicultural teams. In

multicultural teams, team members seldom understand how their values and beliefs, which are rooted in their cultural origins, impact their actions and suppositions. Apart from that, often team members can hardly understand their teammates' values and realize what their effect on the behavior is. (Antal & Friedman 2005, 72.) Normally people tend to see and interpret situations in accordance with their own "standards". Antal and Friedman (2005) refer to Barna (1998, 173) who states that "the assumption of similarity" is one of the most considerable bottlenecks on the way to effective communication between persons from different cultures. (ibid.)

Table 1 below illustrates an example of a multicultural team comprised of three team members with different cultural value orientations, which may influence teamwork regarding the team members' perception of leadership styles, communication styles, teamwork goals etc.

Table 1. A team comprised of three individuals with their cultural orientations, which influence teamwork (Adair & Ganai 2013, 201)

Cultural Background	Time Management	Leadership	Teamwork Goals	Communication Style
American team member	Likes schedules and deadlines	Likes leaders to empower and involve subordinates in decisions	Values personal outcomes	Likes explicit and direct communication
French team member	Likes schedules and deadlines	Likes leaders to give direction to subordinates	Values group outcomes	Likes implicit and direct communication
Brazilian team member	Dislikes schedules and deadlines	Likes leaders to give direction to subordinates	Values group outcomes	Likes implicit and indirect communication

In an attempt to understand the values and beliefs more deeply and improve interactions between culturally diverse persons, versatile models or frameworks of cultures were coined (Antal & Friedman 2005, 72).

### 2.1.3 *Culture and cultural models*

The role of culture is considered to be important for business. Its impact on business has been studied for more than 30 years. (Antal & Friedman 2005, 70.). Culture can be defined in various ways, however, it seems possible to distinguish the main principles of culture, which are common to all types of definitions:

1. "Culture is a total pattern of behavior that is consistent and compatible in its components. It is not a collection of random behaviors, but behaviors that are internally related and integrated" as defined by Hoebel in 1960 (Cateora & Graham 1998, 112). "The various facets of culture are interrelated – you touch a culture in one place and everything else is effected" (Hall 1989, 16).
2. "Culture is learned behavior. It is not biologically transmitted. It depends on environment, not heredity. Thus, it can be called the man-made part of the environment" as defined by Hoebel in 1960 (Cateora & Graham 1998, 112). "It is not innate, but learned" (Hall 1989, 16).
3. "Culture is behavior that is shared by a group of people, a society. It can be considered as the distinctive way of life of people" as defined by Hoebel in 1960 (Cateora & Graham 1998, 112). "It is shared and in effect defines the boundaries of different groups" (Hall 1989, 16).

Culture can also be compared to an iceberg with two parts: a visible and an invisible one. The visible part includes such aspects as spoken and written language, behavior and cultural artifacts; whereas, the invisible part embraces values, beliefs and behavioral norms. The visible part is a reflection of the invisible part. (Antal & Friedman 2005, 71.)

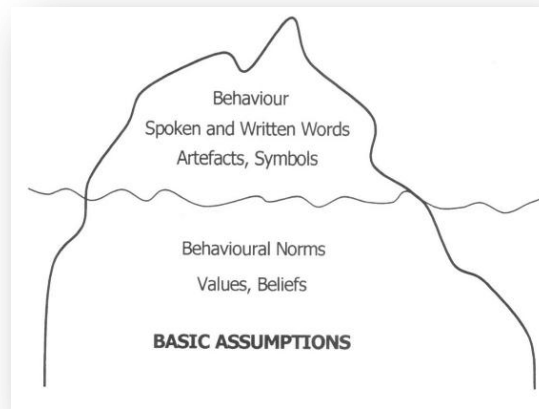


Figure 1. Culture as iceberg (Antal & Friedman 2005, 72)

In order to reveal the invisible part of the iceberg, the cultural frameworks or models were formulated. The cultural frameworks or models can be defined in a simplified manner as formulas with the help of which one can try to reveal the reasons behind the team members' visible behaviors since the majority of the models are built on various cultural dimensions or categories, which include values and norms.

Fougère and Moulettes (2007, 3) point out that the popularity of the “normative models” of culture has increased in the business organizations due to globalization and internationalization. Many organizations presume that these models could be of help on the way to worldwide competitiveness (ibid.).

However, Hall (1989) highlights that the cultural models are theoretical and cannot be fully complete in nature. Hall suggests that the theoretical models as such are “abstractions” and, thus, some aspects may not be included within. In some set of circumstances the issues left out could be more significant than the included aspects. (13-14.)

The most widely used models of cultures or cultural frameworks can be named as follows: Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck value orientation theory (1961); Hall's cross-cultural theory (1960, 1976, 1981, 1990); Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980, 2001); Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner dimensions of culture (1993, 1998); Lewis model (1996). Table 2 summarizes four widely applied models.

Table 2. Main cultural frameworks, compiled by the author from different resources (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck 1961; Hall 1989; Hofstede 2011; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1998)

<i><b>Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck value orientation theory (1961)</b></i>	<i><b>Hall's cross-cultural theory (1960, 1976, 1981, 1990)</b></i>	<i><b>Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1980, 2001)</b></i>	<i><b>Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner dimensions of culture (1993, 1998)</b></i>
<i>Cultural dimensions</i>			
Relationships with nature: subjugation, harmony, mastery	Dimension of time: monochronic time, polychronic time	Power Distance: low vs. high	Relations to other people:
Understanding of human nature: are people evil, good or neutral?	Dimension of space: personal space, communal space	Uncertainty Avoidance: low vs. high	<i>Universalism vs. Particularism dimension;</i>
Relationships with other people: hierarchical, group-oriented and individualistic	Dimension of context: high-context (HC) and low-context (LC)	Individualism – Collectivism	<i>Individualism vs. collectivism/communitarianism dimension;</i>
Relation to time: past, present or future orientation		Masculinity – Femininity	<i>Emotional dimension (the range of feelings expressed);</i>
Relation to modes of human activities: doing, being or controlling		Long Term – Short Term Orientation	<i>Specific vs. Diffuse (the range of involvement)</i>
		Indulgence – Restraint	<i>Achievement vs. Ascription (how status is accorded)</i>
			Relation to time: past, present, future orientation; sequential and synchronous approach
			Relation to environment: internal vs. external control

Thus, the cultural categories can be used in the attempt to understand possible differences in beliefs and values of the team members. However, there is a risk to apply them solely to all the situations without being sensitive to the particular context or other important factors (e.g. gender, age, education etc.). One needs also to consider other aspects without being completely dominated by the cultural models or frameworks. Nevertheless, the majority of the challenges, which are observed and researched in the multicultural teams, can be better understood and



considered through the application of the cultural categories originating from the cultural models.

#### *2.1.4 Understanding challenges in multicultural teams*

In accordance to a survey published in 2001 in which 58 senior executives from nine multinational companies participated in, the most important and difficult issues in the culturally diverse teams are "cultivating trust among members, overcoming communication barriers, obtaining clarity regarding team objectives, aligning goals of individual team members, ensuring team knowledge and skills" (Govindarajan & Gupta 2001, 64).

In the same vein Shuffler, Kramer, and Burke (2016, 3) notice that the cultural variations of a team may have impact on the "cooperation, feedback, communication... decision-making and team performance". Likewise, Tirmizi (2008, 2) refers to Young (1998) who indicates the main difficulties in the multicultural team management as members' relationships with each other, including different communication styles and "cultural orientations". Tirmizi (ibid.) also adds that Iles (1995) sees that "misunderstanding, lack of competence and stereotyping" can be also named among the important difficulties when working in the multicultural teams. Conflicts (which can be solved in a productive or unproductive ways) can also be named as one of the major challenges, which the multicultural teams may face (Illner & Kruse 2007, 14; Govindarajan & Gupta 2001, 64). Antal and Friedman (2005, 72) refer to Adler (2002, 77) who states that "conflicts occur because people from different countries, for example, hold different basic fundamental values and assumptions, so they see, interpret, evaluate and act on events differently". Additionally, Gardenswartz and Rowe (2003, 80) state, that the person's background affects both the attitude to the team and its teammates and contribution to the team.

In accordance to Behfar, Kern, and Brett (2006) multicultural team challenges can be classified into nine categories. However, the author of the thesis discusses the most important challenges from the present study's point of view meaning that not all categories are presented below.

### *Direct vs. indirect confrontation*

For some team members direct confrontation seems acceptable, for others this type of confrontation cannot be used (Behfar et al. 2006, 239.) Within direct and indirect confrontation styles, three forms of confrontation may be highlighted: verbal, non-verbal and involving a third party confrontation. The persons representing indirect confrontation style do not express their thoughts in a direct way and prefer to employ methods that would awaken their interlocutor's "associative thinking". On the contrary, the individuals following direct confrontation would express their thoughts in a straightforward way with the reasoning behind the claim. Non-verbal confrontation aims to show that some serious problem occurs and differs in indirect and direct styles. Involving a third party into a problem or conflict resolution is used in both confrontation styles. The only difference is the time when this party is asked to participate (indirect confrontation: in the beginning of a problem's occurrence; direct confrontation: on later stages of problem's development). (Brett, Behfar, & Sanchez-Burks 2014, 144.)

Likewise, Meyer (2015) conducted a thorough research on different negotiation styles and concluded that cultures could be classified in accordance to their confrontation and level of expressivity. Some cultures avoid confrontation but still are expressive in their emotions, others avoid confrontation without showing many emotions, the other type of culture would be direct in the confrontation style with many emotions being shown and some would be direct and reserved. Thus, expressivity and type of confrontation may also vary.

### *Ways or norms how problems are solved and decisions are made*

This aspect includes the way in which team members find solutions and make decisions, whether the decision-making is focused mainly on the efficiency or whether it has the relationship building aspects. (Behfar et al. 2006, 240.) A dimension of universalism vs. particularism (rules vs. relationships) coined by Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner can be applied here to understand the reasoning behind the differences in the approaches. The universalism can be defined as "what is good and right can be defined and always applies". Particularistic societies imply

that relationships are more important than rules or norms; additionally, the circumstances need to be taken into consideration in the particular situations. (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner 1998, 8.)

#### *Aspects regarding respect and hierarchical status*

Different cultures embrace versatile understanding of hierarchy and authoritative order. (Behfar et al. 2006, 242.) A problem may appear when a member from a high power distance culture needs to report to the employee who is lower in rank (ibid., 243). A dimension of power distance was formulated by Hofstede and it is defined as the way in which societies solve the aspect of lack of equality (Hofstede 2011, 8), or as the allocation of power and its acceptance by the members of a society (Nardon & Steers 2009, 5).

#### *Pre-existing non-work related stereotypes and prejudices*

The stereotypes or prejudices may exist in relation to people representing different cultures (Behfar et al. 2006, 243). A stereotype is “a fixed, oversimplified idea about a particular social category or collective culture that strongly influences our expectation and behavior” (Nguyen-Phuong-Mai 2017, 88). A stereotype can be formed by applying collective norms to individuals or vice versa by coining incorrect group norm and applying it to the whole group from some single individual (ibid., 95). Through stereotyping there is a risk to oversimplify people by labeling them (ibid., 93). The prejudices can be depicted as “deeply held negative feelings associated with a particular group” (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy 2013, 234).

#### *Implicit vs. explicit communication*

Explicit communication refers to a higher degree to the low-context societies while implicit communication refers to the high-context societies. The clashes between these types may create problematic issues causing misunderstanding in the team. (Behfar et al. 2006, 245.) To illustrate this challenge, it also seems appropriate to give the following example: “Someone who has a circular thinking process and indirect expression of thoughts cannot maximize his potential on a team where linear thinking is valued” (Halverson 2008, 47).

Hall states that a high-context communication (HC) implies reading information, for example, from the physical environment or people, since only a small part of information is actually embedded into the explicit message itself. A low-context communication (LC) means that the main part of the information is transferred through explicit messages. (Hall 1989, 91.) In order to provide a clearer picture on a HC communication, the following example can be given:

*“...People raised in high-context systems expect more of others than do the participants in low-context systems. When talking about something that they have on their minds, a high-context individual will expect his interlocutor to know what’s bothering him, so that he doesn’t need to be specific. The result is that he will talk around and around the point, in effect putting all the pieces in place except the crucial one. Placing its properly – this keystone – is the role of his interlocutor. To do this for him is an insult and a violation of his individuality” (ibid., 113).*

Additionally, syncing between people is of high importance in the HC cultures (ibid., 79). Hall points out that a HC system communication is predictable for those who is acquainted to it. However, for those who are not familiar to it, it may be “completely mystifying” and difficult to decode. (ibid., 53.) The reason for that can be found in so-called “preprogramming” which means that part of the information is embedded in both the “receiver” of the information and the context. “Preprogramming” requires time and needs to be conducted thoroughly. Thanks to the already existing programs the communication becomes complete and can be characterized as “economical, fast, efficient and satisfying”. The HC communication patterns change slowly. On the contrary, the LC communications are prone to quick changes. (ibid., 101.)

The above-mentioned categories of challenges may appear in multicultural teams and need to be addressed. One way of addressing them is to define and set team rules and norms, which all the team members are supposed to accept and follow. This set of rules and norms can be defined as team culture.

## 2.2 Team culture

### 2.2.1 Team culture and its role

As far as the multicultural teams are concerned, team culture becomes of considerable importance. Fruchter and Townsend (2003, 60) refer to O'Hara-

Devereaux and Johansen (1994) who indicate that people coming from different cultures may generate some “third way” to “balance out their cultural differences”. This third way may be defined as a third culture that means a unified culture, which is blended from several cultures of the team members. The third culture’s synonym is a hybrid culture. A hybrid culture is an “emergent and simplified set of norms, expectations, and roles that team members share and enact [that] offers a common sense of identity that becomes team specific... And facilitates team interaction” (Early & Mosakowski 2000, 26). In line with this suggestion, Sağ, Kaynak and Sezen (2016, 62) also indicate that the multicultural teams need to form team culture in order “to bridge cultural differences”. However, the formation of a hybrid culture in the multicultural teams requires time and effort (Early & Mosakowski 2000, 29). Early and Mosakowski (2000, 27) emphasize that the teams which are effective need to have strong team culture. This culture may be formed on existing features of the team members, which overlap or some new norms are to be shaped (ibid.).

The efficient teams can be characterized by such outcomes as the task outcomes, process outcomes (e.g. satisfaction, cohesion) and individual learning of team members (Wolff 1998, 27). Taking into consideration the indications of the mentioned research, the need to build a third or hybrid culture in a multicultural team considerably grows.

### *2.2.2 Factors influencing team culture*

In the chapter above the role of team culture was described. However, team culture does not occur itself on its own. It needs to be built on some basis or ground. In relation to this suggestion, it is possible to refer to the research made by Sağ et al. (2016). Sağ and colleagues (2016) conducted a deep and unique quantitative research on various factors, which affect performance of the multicultural teams (interpretive structural modeling (ISM) approach was applied in the study). This research aimed at building a hierarchy of factors, which influence culturally diverse teams’ performance. Team culture was included as one of the factors. Figure 2 shows the “driving power and dependencies” among the factors or the hierarchy of the factors (ibid., 66).

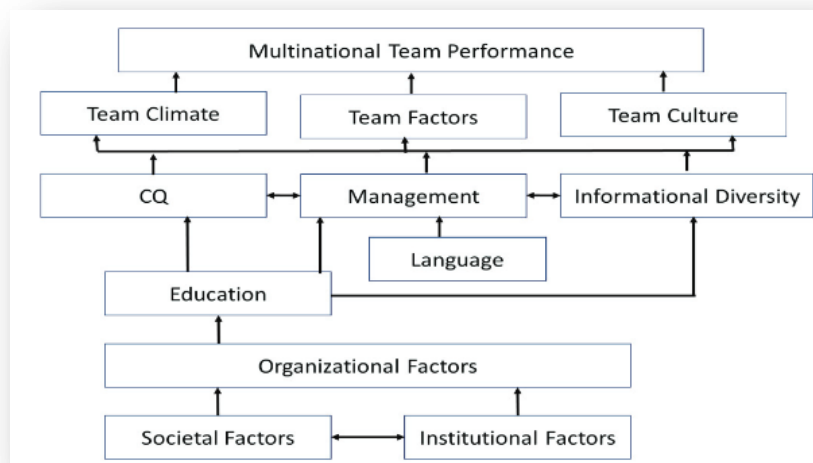


Figure 2. Factors, which impact multicultural team performance (Sağ et al. 2016, 67)

The factors, which are placed in the bottom of the structure (Figure 2), have a high driving power, which means that these factors are prerequisites for other factors to be influenced or developed. Consequently, the factors, which are located on the top of this structure, have a weak driving power since they can be considered as the last steps on the way to the team performance which itself is not a factor but a result. These weak factors do not have high influence powers regarding other factors. The arrows practically show how the factors influence each other. (ibid., 66-68.)

In accordance to the structure, the management, cultural intelligence and informational diversity influence team culture. (ibid.) Sağ and colleagues (ibid., 68) suggest that in order to coin working team culture, the management needs to be effective and active in building it. Sağ and others (ibid.) also refer to the research of Earley and Mosakowski (2010) who state that cultural intelligence is needed for the creation of team culture as a hybrid culture. Informational diversity also affects team culture since the team members who work in high “informational diversity” need to communicate more often with each other, which itself can lead to a higher conflict probability. As it has been discussed in Chapter 2.2., tasks’ interdependence also influences the levels of needed information and the knowledge exchange between the team members. Thus, informational diversity is more likely to occur in sequential,

reciprocal and team tasks' interdependence types. This aspect also impacts the way how team culture is shaped.

In summary, in accordance to Sağ and colleagues (2016) team culture has a weak driving power since it has the direct impact only on the outcome, namely team performance. Team culture cannot influence the management or organizational culture, for example. Apart from that, through factors of management, cultural intelligence and informational diversity, team culture becomes dependent on other factors such as organizational factors (including organizational structure and culture), education levels of individuals. All these aspects need to be taken into account when trying to build team culture.

### *2.2.3 Team culture and cultural iceberg model*

The definitions of team culture, organizational culture and national culture are all rooted in the word "culture". At it has been defined in Chapter 2.3., culture as such has three main principles: "culture is a total pattern of behavior...", "culture is learned behavior..." and "culture is behavior that is shared by a group of people..." as defined by Hoebel in 1960 (Cateora & Graham 1998, 112). All these principles could be also referred to team culture. Team culture can "unite" the team members who would learn the required behavioral patterns, follow them and share with all the team members.

Friedman and Antal (2005, 71) state that the concept of a culture as an iceberg can be applied to any groups of people who are stable during some period of time. For example, a senior executive T. Rick created an organizational culture iceberg (2014). Likewise, Schmiedel, Brocke, and Recker (2015, 4) mention the visible and invisible elements in organizational culture which in principle could be relevant to team culture as well, since organizational culture can be seen as one of the factors which develops a ground on which team culture is created, as research by Sağ and colleagues indicates (2016). As Tirmizi's definition (2008) points out, the teams always operate in a bigger setting, i.e. company or organization. Since the teams are embedded into the context of a company / organization, they would use, for example, some resources provided by its bigger entity, which belong to the visible part of organizational culture. Thus, the visible and invisible cultural elements of

organizational culture may impact to some extent smaller cultures within, i.e. team cultures.

Following the logic of Friedman and Antal (2005) and applying it to team culture it also seems possible to suggest that behaviors (actions and sayings) of a team and its team members represent the visible part of team culture iceberg whereas norms and values developed by a team belong to the invisible part of this iceberg. “Culture drives behavior, and behavior drives habits...” (Gordon 2010, 27 – 28). Thus, the norms created within a team would influence the behavior of its members.

Taken together, suggestions provided by Friedman and Antal (2005), Schmiedel, Brocke, and Recker (2015), Sağ and colleagues (2016) make it possible to visualize team culture in the form of an iceberg as follows:

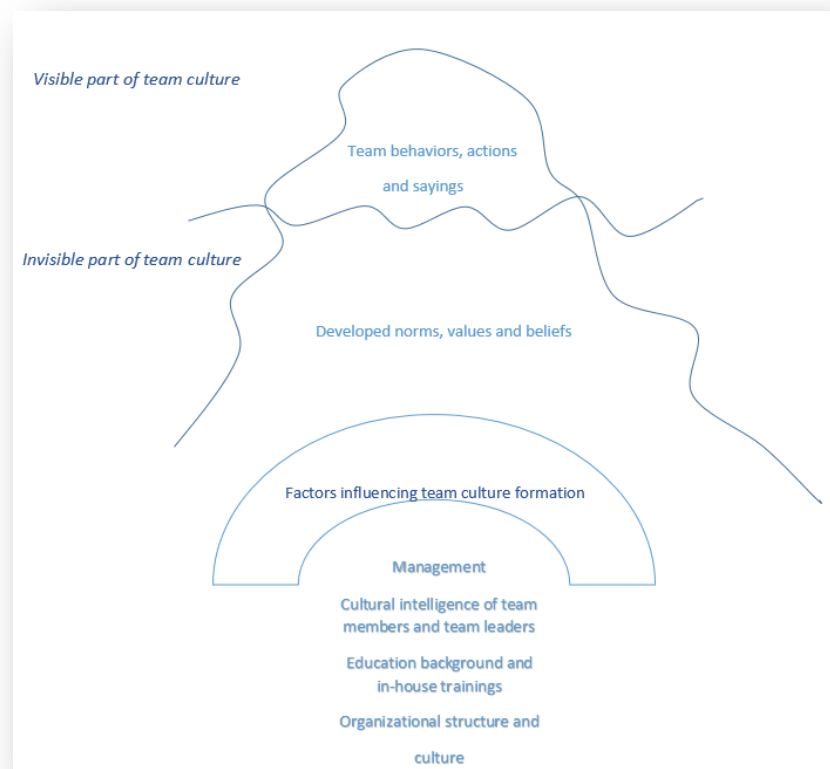


Figure 3. Team culture in the form of an iceberg made by author through synthesizing information from various sources (Friedman & Antal (2005); Schmiedel, Brocke, & Recker (2015); Sağ & et al. (2016))



## 2.3 Team emotional intelligence as team culture

### *2.3.1 Definition of team emotional intelligence and its role*

Team emotional intelligence (later TEI) can be defined as a type of team culture. The research on TEI can still be considered to be on its way to development (Truninger 2009, 27). In 2001 an article on TEI was published by V. U. Druskat and S. B. Wolff (Druskat & Wolff 2001, 82). Druskat and Wolff conducted a two-year research at Johnson & Johnson company and came to the conclusion that team or group emotional intelligence was a factor of high importance for achieving team's success (Ross 2008). In principle, this finding is aligned with the study conducted by Sağ and colleagues (2016) who state that team culture is one of the direct prerequisites to team performance.

The authors of the TEI model, Druskat and Wolff, underline that particularly TEI (and not individual emotional intelligence) plays a vital role in organizations since different types of work is handled by teams (Druskat & Wolff 2001, 79). TEI can be defined as “a team culture created by a set of norms and expectations that build a productive social and emotional environment (e.g., trust) that leads to constructive interactions, collaborative work processes, and team effectiveness” as defined by Druskat and Wolff in 2012 (Druskat 2015, 17). Thus, TEI may become a platform to emotionally intelligent behavior of the team members coming from versatile cultures. It needs to be noted that the model of TEI does not aim to substitute other theories on how to build the effective teams; its target is to fill in the gap in the existing theories (GEI Partners Website 2016).

In a team, team fundamentals, such as goals and objectives, meeting procedures, roles and responsibilities are to be clearly defined and valid (Druskat 2015, 67). In other words, team fundamentals can be considered to be the basis on which TEI can be formed. As far as multicultural teams are concerned, Sağ and colleagues (2016) state that effective management, cultural intelligence and informational diversity also have a direct impact on the team culture's successful formation in the multicultural teams.

TEI positively contributes to the formation of trust, team identity and team efficacy which allow the team members to have a full engagement into a teamwork with considerable participation, cooperation and collaboration; otherwise, the team members would still cooperate and participate to some extent but without complete involvement into tasks (Druskat & Wolff 2001, 82). As a result of full engagement, a team can achieve better outcomes, in other words be more efficient.

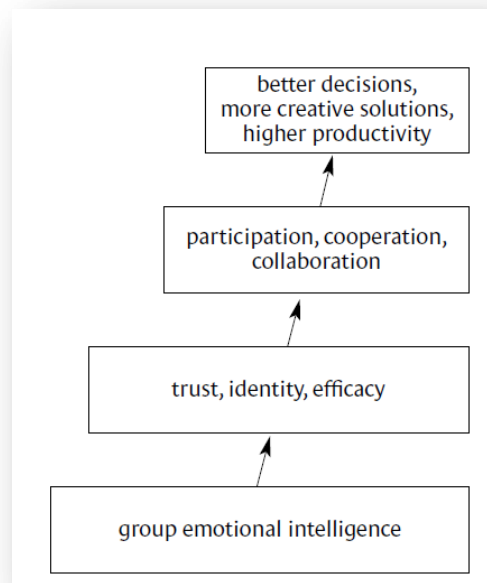


Figure 4. Group emotional intelligence and its effect (Druskat & Wolff 2001, 83)

The developers of TEI model, namely Druskat and Wolff, have also created a survey called GEI survey (that stands for group emotional intelligence survey) that is used to evaluate the team emotional intelligence, team fundamentals, trust etc. in teams.

### 2.3.2 Formation of team emotional intelligence norms

The norms of TEI aim at regulating the communication and interaction in a constructive way in challenging or difficult situations. It means that the main emphasis of these norms is not embedded in the soft areas, e.g., state of "being happy". (Elfenbein 2006, 13.)

Norms cannot emerge by themselves. Some processes need to occur in order to facilitate the norms' formation. Truninger (2009, 16) indicates that in accordance to Feldman (1984), Bettenhausen and Murnighan (1985) norms are coined in the course of four-stage process. However, Truninger (2009, 17) outlines that sometimes the norms may not formed in accordance to the stages depicted above. The stages are as follows:

**Stage 1.** Team is created. Team members tend to behave in accordance to their previous experiences gained in some other situations. It is important to have in a team a few team members who are aware of importance of emotional intelligence for the whole team. (Truninger 2009, 16-17.)

**Stage 2.** Team members communicate with each other and start to evaluate whether their behavior is aligned with the expectations of other team members and beliefs of the whole team (ibid.)

**Stage 3.** Team members begin to question the existing models of behavior and are eager to suggest some alternatives to these patterns. In this stage emotional intelligence norms may be coined. In the case when the majority of the team members does not accept or support the TEI norms, then there is a need for some prompt actions to be taken in order to convince the whole team to accept the norms. These actions can be taken by official team leaders, informal team leaders, and some active team members. The target can be alternatively achieved through trainings or even organizational culture of the whole company. (ibid.)

**Stage 4.** Team members accept the norms and behave in accordance to them. Initial behavioral patterns are adjusted to these norms. (ibid.)

The team norms can be often invisible and implicit, but in the efficient teams they are brought onto the explicit level since a team discusses about these norms. (Podcast Episode #059: Team Emotional Intelligence: Cracking the Code on High Performing Teams with Dr. Steven Wolff & Dr. Vanessa Druskat. n.d.)

### 2.3.3 Types of team emotional intelligence norms

As it has become evident from the four stage-processes, the norms are formed during interaction between team members (Wolff 2006, 4). The interaction within a group is guided by its members (individual-level norms), entire group (group-level norms), people not belonging to the particular group (cross-boundary level) (ibid., 1).

Table 3. Druskat and Wolff's classification of norms (Koman, Wolff, & Howard 2008, 44)

Levels	Dimensions	Norms
Individual	Group Awareness of members	Interpersonal Understanding
	Group Management of members	Confronting Members who break norms
		Caring Behavior
Group	Group Self-Awareness	Team Self-Evaluation
	Group Self-Management	Creating Resources for working with emotion
		Creating an affirmative environment
		Proactive Problem Solving
Cross-Boundary (External)	Group Social Awareness	Organizational Understanding
	Group Management of External Relationships	Building External Relationships

*Individual-level norms* indicate to which extent the team members show particular behavior regarding each other.

- Interpersonal understanding: the level of perception and understanding by the team members of each other's views, needs, emotions, competencies. (Wolff 2006, 2.)

Interpersonal understanding is seen as highly important element in building trust. Trust enables the information and ideas sharing. After forming of the team, it is recommended to get acquainted with all the team members. In the very beginning "a launch meeting" can serve as a place for socializing. Even five minutes before each regular meeting could be organized for exchanging personal ideas and perceptions on tasks' accomplishments and some work ideas. Through these activities it seems possible to uncover some unexpected new ideas from some previous experiences of the team members. (Ross 2008.)

- Confronting members who break norms: the way of addressing team member's behavior which is not compliant with the set norms of the team and which can negatively affect the whole team's effective work. (Wolff 2006, 2.)

The ways the team applies this norm may vary. Some teams would prefer to handle the issue on one-on-one level and others would like to discuss about the problems in the meetings (Podcast Episode #059: Team Emotional Intelligence: Cracking the Code on High Performing Teams with Dr. Steven Wolff & Dr. Vanessa Druskat. n.d.).

However, special attention is to be paid to the way the feedback is given to the member behaving in a disruptive way. Feedback is to be given in a constructive way, otherwise, there is a risk that it is perceived as a personal attack. Thus, the team members who possess good skills in handling this issue are of critical importance. (Druskat & Wolff 2006, 4-5.)

- Caring behavior: the level of respecting, appreciating, and showing support regarding the team members (Wolff 2006, 2).

*Group-level norms* indicate to which extent the group (or team) displays particular behavior regarding itself as an entity (ibid.)

- Team self-evaluation: the level of awareness of the group's performance, its emotional state (ibid.).

Stubbs (2005, 17) points out that in accordance to Druskat (1996) team's self-evaluation includes searching information about the way how team acts and accomplishes work, making comparisons of own team's performance and other teams' performance accordingly.

- Creating resources for working with emotion: the level of arranging special resources, which give opportunity to discuss how the group deals with emotions (Wolff 2006, 2).

Stubbs (2005, 18) refers to Hamme (2003) who gave a norm's definition as the "acceptance of emotions as part of the group work as well as the expression and

examination of team member feelings". Resources can be defined as special time, tools, open discussion periods etc. (Wolff, Druskat, Koman, & Messer 2006, 235).

Wolff and colleagues (2006, 235) refer to Levy (1984) who has stated that the persons need special resources for handling emotions, without organizing these resources ignorance or suppression of emotions may easily occur. Lack of motivation or apathy may become as consequences of suppressed emotions (ibid.).

- Creating an affirmative environment: the level of team's being in a good mood under difficult circumstances (Wolff 2006, 3).

When a team has thought of special resources to address emotions, then a norm of creating an affirmative environment shall be coined. Positive environment needs to be formed. It helps the team to sustain positivity. (Wolff et. al 2006, 235 – 236.)

- Proactive problem solving: the level of predicting or expecting unwelcome matters or situations and acting in order to eliminate them (Wolff 2006, 3).

*Cross-boundary level norms* show the level of group's behavior towards stakeholders outside the group.

- Organizational understanding: understanding of the matters of interest / importance of people not belonging to the group; realizing the group's contribution to the goals of the whole organization. (Wolff 2006, 3.)
- Building external relations: the level of creating relationships with the people outside the group (Wolff 2006, 3). The norm implies that the team members build relations with other teams within the organization. As it has been pointed out in Chapter 2.2., not all team members need to participate in this norm development.

The norms are to be coined and created in the work setting. The norms developed in some other context would not have much impact on the work and work-related interactions. (Wolff 2006, 4.)

## 2.4 Theoretical framework for the thesis

Team building and teamwork itself is a demanding process and in culturally diverse teams it faces a range of versatile challenges. As it has been described in Chapter 2, cultural dimensions or orientations impact the team members' perceptions and expectations regarding the team members, teamwork and the team as a whole. These challenges need to be solved in a constructive way; otherwise, they may turn to a stumbling rock on the way to the team effectiveness. As it has been indicated in Chapter 3, a third or hybrid culture approach may be considered as a solution to be applied to multicultural teams. TEI can be treated as a third culture in building cooperation, participation and collaboration between culturally diverse team members that in the end will make the teams more efficient.

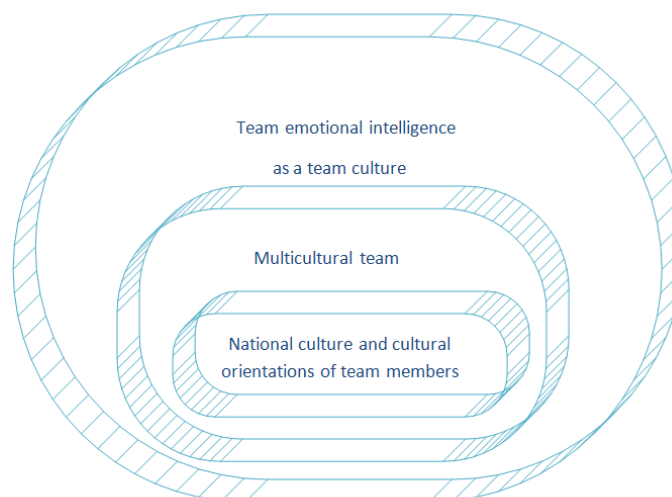


Figure 5. Theoretical framework for the current research (synthesized from literature)

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Research approach

This study employed the qualitative approach and aimed to open up the points of views of the participants in the TEI and its role in teamwork. Since the participants

had different profiles as far as their cultural background was concerned, it was hoped that it might lead to versatile perspectives and points of view that were considered valuable for the present study. Additionally, the quantitative research approach is often applied to evaluate team emotional intelligence. Thus, it was presumed that the qualitative research employed here might add some new insights to the existing theory. Moreover, the qualitative approach was employed since it enables to describe, interpret and understand the phenomenon of TEI in the context of multicultural teams.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016, 11-12) highlight that qualitative research embraces versatile philosophical approaches or positions. Wilson (2014, 10) underlines that in research as such, the main arguments on philosophical approaches arise in connection to positivism and interpretivism, which are two different approaches. However, in some cases it is actually difficult to be completely compliant with one of these paradigms. In the response to this challenge one can probably turn to pragmatism. Pragmatism may be compared to some form of a “mixed” paradigm that does not deny pragmatism or interpretivism and approaches the research problem from both angles. The main research questions within pragmatism are “what” and “how” questions. (ibid.) The focus of this research can be considered to be within pragmatism since it has some features of positivism and some of interpretivism, though this study does not employ mixed methods, which are often used with the pragmatism paradigm. The author of the study attempted to apply the theory to the real context and find some qualitative characteristics of the phenomenon: to see in what form team members with different cultural backgrounds perceived the facets of the TEI, and understand what role the phenomenon played in the context of the teams. Apart from that, the author aimed at seeing how TEI as a phenomenon occurred in these teams.

Following the pragmatism paradigm, this study has the qualities of abductive research, meaning that both deduction and induction were used in the different stages of the process (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2016, 24). The research questions for this study were formulated by applying deduction since these questions were coined based on the theoretical knowledge base. Likewise, the empirical questions for the interviews were formulated through deduction meaning that they were derived from



the existing theory. However, in the analysis stage induction was applied: the data led to the generation of some new sub-themes or categories inside the already predetermined themes.

The current study can also be defined as descripto-explanatory. A descripto-explanatory study is “a study whose purpose is both descriptive and explanatory where, usually, description is the precursor to explanation” (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill 2009, 591). This study aimed to describe and explain the phenomenon of team emotional intelligence in multicultural teams.

Eriksson and Kovalainen (2016, 29-30) indicate that the research questions lead to the choice of particular research methods. Taking into consideration the formulated research questions, a case study seemed appropriate as a research method for this particular study. Miles and Huberman (1994, 25) define a case as “a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context...the case...is your unit of analysis”. The boundary defines the context of a case (ibid.). This boundary may be compared to a filter that keeps certain particular aspects within a case and leaves some other non-relevant aspects out. As far as the present study is concerned, the phenomenon of TEI as a team culture occurs in a bounded context of multicultural teams.

The same case study, however, may have several units of analysis. This type of case study is known as an embedded single – case study that implies sub-units (Yin 1994, 41-42). The present study may also be defined as an embedded single-case study. Since the research objective was to define and explain TEI in the context of multicultural teams, it is considered possible to treat both multicultural teams as a single case with two sub-units of analysis. The first and second sub-units were the team-level units of analysis, namely Team A and Team B. Figure 6 shows the layout of the case study design employed.

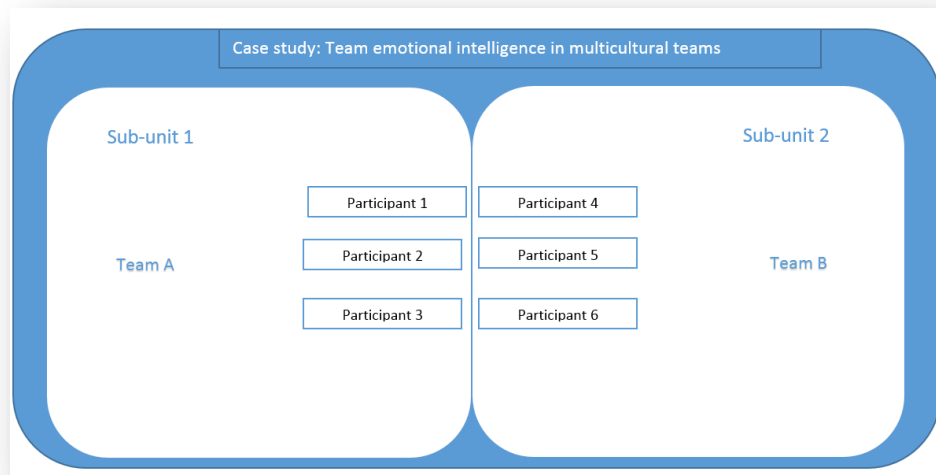


Figure 6. Embedded single-case study, made by the author

Despite the flexibility and fluidity of qualitative research, there is a need to make an initial research design from the very beginning of the research process (Mason 2002, 24). The main areas of a qualitative research design can be defined, for example, as clear research questions, methodological approach, and the analysis of the data (ibid., 45). The simplified “blueprint” of the current research design can be seen in Figure 7. The other areas of qualitative research design, such as context, data collection and analysis, ethical principles are discussed in detail in the next chapters.

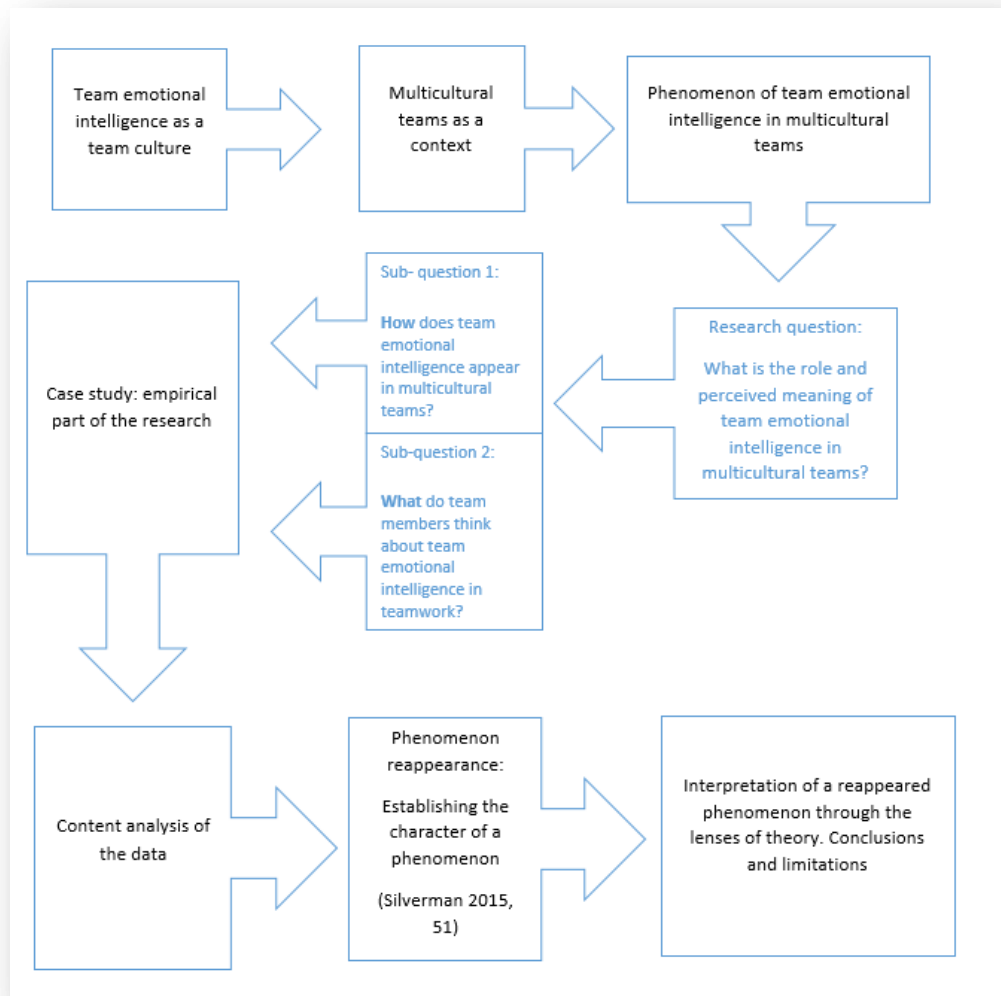


Figure 7. Simplified "blueprint" of a current research design, synthesized by the author from different sources on methodology (Silverman 2015; Mason 2002; Yin 1994, 2011)

### 3.2 Context

It was decided to implement the study in the context of multicultural teams. The present study was not initiated or assigned by particular companies, the assignor was JAMK Centre for Competitiveness. As pointed out in Chapter 3.1., the units of analysis were teams. Thus, the boundary of this research was the team setting meaning that organizational level units of analysis (i.e. companies) were not fully taken into consideration. However, in spite of the fact that companies or organizations were not seen as units of analysis, it still needs to be noted that all

teams operate in a wider context. Consequently, short descriptions of the companies had to be provided. However, before giving descriptions of the companies and teams, the issue of confidentiality and anonymity needs to be covered.

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill mention (2009, 194) that confidentiality and anonymity provide easier access to companies or individuals. This statement is also applicable for this research: the participants agreed to be interviewed if no particular identifiable information was mentioned in the research. To provide anonymity and confidentiality, no names or other identifiable information can be given. Due to this limitation, the teams are referred to as Team A and Team B. All individuals (team members) are coded as Participant 1 – Participant 6 to provide full confidentiality. Participant 1, 2 and Participant 3 belong to Team A, and Participant 4, 5 and 6 to Team B. Thus, a total of six persons participated in the research: two women and four men. The age of the participants ranged from 30 to 50 years. Information on gender and age was not linked to any particular team members because of confidentiality reasons. Additionally, this research did not include gender and age into the context of the study.

Taking into consideration the above-mentioned limitations, the descriptions of the companies and teams are provided as follows. Team A's company field is information technology. The company is global with its subsidiary in Finland. The subsidiary's working language is English. Team A is quite a big team with more than 20 persons with versatile cultural backgrounds. This team can be characterized as a technical team. Participants 1, 2 and 3 represented this team in the present study. All the participants had a long common working experience in Team A (each of the interviewees had worked in the team for seven-ten years), although, currently, none of them worked there any longer due to different circumstances. Team B's company field is manufacturing. The company itself can be defined as Finnish although it belongs to a multinational company with the headquarters outside Finland. Thus, the company of Team B is a subsidiary. The working language of this subsidiary is Finnish, although the working language inside Team B is English. This team is a small sales team, which is comprised of three team members (their work experience in the same team ranged from one to three years). All team members from Team B participated

in this research and were coded as Participant 4, 5 and 6. These three team members had different cultural backgrounds and currently worked in the company.

In line with the confidentiality and anonymity principles, it seems impossible to directly link a cultural background or a national culture to any particular interviewees since through this data there is a probability that, for example, some team members may identify the other colleagues after publication of the thesis. As Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, 187) state “...as a researcher in an organization you will need to remain sensitive to the fact that your presence is a temporary one, whereas the people from whom you collect data will need to work together after you depart. This will have an impact on the way in which you both analyze your data and report your research findings”. Once confidentiality and anonymity are promised, then they are to be maintained throughout the process (ibid., 194). Thus, principles of confidentiality and anonymity were strictly followed in this study.

However, this research still requires that some information is provided on the cultural origins of the individuals. Therefore, it was decided to apply some cultural framework or model in order to substitute direct indications of the team members’ cultures. Despite the existing criticism in the cross-cultural research field, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions model was chosen since it is the only model that provides a tool for obtaining scores for the cultural dimensions of national cultures (via Country Comparison Tool available on Hofstede Insights website). However, it needs to be added that the author of this study excluded the “indulgence vs. restraint” dimension since it is the newest and the least researched dimension. Thus, only the dimensions of individualism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity, long-term orientation are reflected on below.

In Table 4, the dimensions’ scores are not indicated in concrete numbers. However, they are given in scale levels, for example 30 – 35, with some comment whether this level is high, average or low. In addition to this, no participants’ codes are mentioned. Instead of the participants’ codes, the cultures are listed randomly in the format “Culture A – C” and “Culture D - Culture F”. Thus, it is not visible which member relates to which culture (for example, Participant 1’s culture is reflected in the table but at the same time it is “hidden” within the range of Culture A – Culture

C). Consequently, the cultural orientations given below only provide an overall picture of the cultural dimensions of the team members' national cultures.

Table 4. Score scales for cultural orientations of team members' national cultures in Team A and Team B based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions model, compiled by the author (initial scores obtained from Country Comparison Tool (Hofstede Insights, 2018))

**Cultural orientations of team members' national cultures in Team A**

<b>Cultural orientations</b>	Individualism 0-100	Power Distance 0-100	Uncertainty Avoidance 0-100	Masculinity 0-100	Long Term Orientation 0-100
<b>Culture A</b>	low, 10 - 15	high, 75 – 80	average, 45 - 50	average, 45 - 50	high, 60 – 65
<b>Culture B</b>	above low, 35 - 40	high, 90 - 95	high, 95 - 100	above low, 35 - 40	high, 80 - 85
<b>Culture C</b>	high, 65 - 70	above low, 35 - 40	high, 65 – 70	high, 65 - 70	high, 80 – 85

**Cultural orientations of team members' national cultures in Team B**

<b>Cultural orientations</b>	Individualism 0-100	Power Distance 0-100	Uncertainty Avoidance 0-100	Masculinity 0-100	Long Term Orientation 0-100
<b>Culture D</b>	low, 20 – 25	high, 95 -100	high, 95-100	low, 20-25	higher than average, 55 - 60
<b>Culture E</b>	above low, 30 – 35	high, 80 – 85	high, 80 – 85	high, 65 - 70	low, 20 – 25
<b>Culture F</b>	above low, 35- 40	high, 90-95	high, 95-100	above low, 35- 40	high, 80 - 85

It needs to be remembered that the cultural orientations as such do not represent or describe the team members, but give some idea about the cultural orientations of the cultures from where the team members originate. Hofstede's cultural dimensions are not to be considered the ultimate characteristics of all persons with particular cultural backgrounds. Visualization of the score data can be seen in Appendix 1.

### 3.3 Data collection

As mentioned in a previous chapter, six persons participated in this study. The persons represented two multicultural teams. A sample was obtained through a purposive sampling technique. The author was familiar with the interviewees thus, it was easier to reach them. It was decided to collect the primary data through interviews; no secondary data was gathered. The interview type employed in the present thesis can be characterized as a structured or standardized interview. Within a pragmatic view discussed in Chapter 3.1., the author of this study believes that it is possible to employ a structured interview, though it needs to be admitted that this type of interview is not often employed in qualitative research. The reason behind is its lack of flexibility in comparison to an unstructured interview, for example.

A structured interview can be used if the researcher developed a deep understanding of the topic in question (Cohen & Crabtree 2006). This understanding makes it possible to build a complete interview guide (ibid.). Since the model of TEI is already formulated and consists of particular norms, it seemed possible to construct a complete interview guide basing on the model. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 81) also highlight that “...a structured and standardized interview is considered “qualitative” when the responses given by participants are open-ended”. The responses given by the interviewees who participated in the study were predominantly open-ended in their nature, which made it possible to explore the meanings of the phenomenon. Thus, the conducted interviews may be still characterized as “qualitative”. Additionally, structured or standardized interviews allow making a comparison of information received from different interviewees in a systematic way (Eriksson & Kovalainen 2008, 81).

The author of this study is not a professional researcher and therefore there was a need to test whether a structured interview was actually suitable or not. Some pilot interview was conducted before the first “real” interview. This probing showed that a structured interview provided open-ended responses and consequently it was decided to follow the questions of the interview guide in the actual interviews. Eriksson and Kovalainen (2008, 82) underline that structured or standardized interviews may be considered as “a good choice” for “inexperienced interviewers”.

The author of this study consciously decided to keep some kind of “neutrality” with the participants in the attempt to eliminate some personal bias that could be caused by the fact of being acquainted with the participants. In this sense, a structured interview is a suitable choice since normally the researchers conducting structured interviews are supposed to generate so-called “balanced rapport” (the term used by Fontana & Frey (1994)). It means that the style of interviewing is to be friendly but not much personal, in other words it can be defined as neutral. The limitation of this style of interviewing is that in this setting the interviewees often tend to respond in a logical way. A logical way of responding may eliminate some emotional aspects, which may be valuable for the research data. (Fontana & Frey 1994, 364.)

The participants were interviewed in the period of 17.12.2017 – 09.01.2018. Five interviews were conducted via Skype video calls and one interview was as a personal face-to-face interview. The video calls were employed because the author of the thesis and the other participants had different geographical locations. The interview questions were not sent to the persons in advance. Before starting the interviews, the author shortly informed the participants about the topic of the research without providing too many details. Additionally, all interviewees were informed that the information received from the interviews would be treated as confidential and anonymous. Apart from that, it was clarified that the participants could refuse to answer any questions if they found them to be uncomfortable or unacceptable. As Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, 195) highlight, it is important to make interviewees aware of a possibility not to give answers to the questions. The researcher got consent from all the participants to use a recorder. Thus, the interviews were recorded and later transcribed. Apart from that, the researcher and three team members from Team B signed a separate letter of consent for participation in the research. The letter of consent stated the aim of the interview, approximate length of the interview and highlighted the principles of confidentiality, anonymity and a principle of voluntary participation. For the individuals representing Team A there was no need to sign the letter since none of them work in the company any longer.

It needs to be admitted, that in spite of conducting a probe interview, there was still a risk to receive short and close-ended responses. Probably the fact of being



acquainted with all the interviewees enabled the participants to be more open and eager to give more insights to their answers. Table 5 below provides detailed information about the length of the conducted interviews and numbers of transcribed pages for each interviewee. The total number of transcribed data is 37 pages.

Table 5. Interview data

Participant	Length of the interview	Number of transcribed pages
Participant 1	52 min.	4,5 pages
Participant 2	1 h 18 min.	8,5 pages
Participant 3	58 min.	4,5 pages
Participant 4	1 h 12 min.	7 pages
Participant 5	1 h 3min.	6 pages
Participant 6	51 min.	6,5 pages

The interview guide was constructed based on the predetermined themes. The questions were formulated by the researcher herself based on the TEI model created by Druskat and Wolff (2001). The complete interview guide with the questions can be seen in Appendix 2.

Table 6. Themes of the interview guide based on the TEI model by Druskat and Wolff (2001). Table continues pp. 39-40

Theme	Relation to the topic area
Perceptions and embodiment of “interpersonal understanding”	Team emotional intelligence
Perceptions and embodiment of “confronting members who break norms”	
Perceptions and embodiment of “caring behavior”	
Perceptions and embodiment of “team self-evaluation”	
Perceptions and embodiment of “creating resources for working with emotion”	

Perceptions and embodiment of “creating an affirmative environment”

Perceptions and embodiment of “proactive problem solving”

Perceptions and embodiment of “organizational understanding”

Perceptions and embodiment of “building external relations”

### 3.4 Data analysis

In the theory, three types of qualitative data analysis approaches are indicated: an inductive approach (or ground-up), an approach with deductive features (or a start list approach) and an integrated approach (Bradley, Curry, & Devers 2007). The present study employed an integrated approach to the qualitative analysis meaning that the main themes were formulated in advance based on the theory and the new sub-themes were generated directly from the data. The structured interview guide gave scope to the themes. In the author’s point of view, the integrated approach was appropriate within the pragmatic paradigm of this study. The present research analysis was guided by nine pre-set themes derived from Druskat and Wolff’s model (2001) as pointed out in Table 6.

When conducting analysis a researcher can concentrate on one case, one individual and one group or alternatively it is possible to make a combination of several units (Taylor-Powell & Renner 2003, 2). The author of this study focused on a combination of the team level units since an embedded case study directed the analysis in this way. Yin (2011, 177) highlights that the data analysis consists of five phases normally: compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpretation and conclusion. The author of the present thesis reviewed the conducted data analysis following the logic of Yin (2011) with some additional theoretical inclusions of other authors on methodology.

#### *Compiling data*

This is the initial phase in the qualitative data analysis. The researcher needs to compile the gathered data following some logic and consistency. (Yin 2011, 182 – 184.) In the present study there were six records or documents. Each documents was named in accordance to the code of a participant.

### *Disassembling data*

The synonyms of disassembling data are known as “fracturing the data or data reduction”. It is impossible to state that there exists only one way of disassembling data, the whole approach depends on the researchers’ choice. (Yin 2011, 186.). The author of this study employed coding as an approach to data disassembling. Coding can be defined as “assigning new labels or codes to selected words, phrases, or other chunks of data in a database”. (ibid., 187.)

On each stage of analysis different types of codes can be generated. On the stage of disassembling data there are two types of codes: Level 1 and Level 2 codes. Level 1 codes are initial codes. (ibid., 187 – 188.) The coding procedure of initial codes was conducted in the form of open coding. These codes can be pointed out in separate columns or, alternatively, indicated in the margins of the document (Taylor-Powell & Renner 2003, 7). The author of this study followed the idea of indicating the initial codes in the margins of a Word document. The coding of initial codes was re-conducted several times in order to depict the raw data in a more precise way. An example on how initial codes were created can be seen in Appendix 3.

Later all these initial codes were transferred into a separate file for grouping them into bigger sets of units. The author of this study followed suggestions of Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003, 7) and Yin (2011) on making the codes organized and combined into the new categories. Bigger groups of codes can be defined as category codes or Level 2 codes (Yin 2011, 187 – 188). The category codes were formed through finding similarities in the initial codes by highlighting them with the same colors (Taylor-Powell & Renner 2003). The author of this study also “coded” and “re-coded” the category codes several times in order to find better match between the initial codes.

### *Reassembling data*

Reassembling data means that the data needs to be rearranged or recombined (Yin 2011, 179). If coding is used, then Level 1 and Level 2 codes or category codes are to be brought onto the higher levels, Level 3 and Level 4 codes accordingly. These codes represent themes or concepts. The main focus of this phase lies on searching for

patterns, it can be compared to “playing with the data” (ibid., 191.) As far as this research is concerned, the phase of data reassembling aimed at generating new and emergent sub-themes from the codes and categories.

Yin suggests that in order to find patterns it is possible to apply the “array approach” in the following forms: creating hierarchical arrays; designing matrices as arrays; working with other types of arrays. (ibid.) The author of this study decided to create a matrix to be used for the sub-themes creation. (ibid., 193.) When the data matrix is completed, then it is possible to “scan” it. (ibid., 194.). The matrix serves as a basis to creation of wider themes (ibid., 196). Through finding similarities between the category codes, the sub-themes were formulated. The category codes remained highlighted in accordance to the colors of the initial codes in order to keep traceability. Besides that, all the supportive quotations were also found from each interview-document. The generated matrix can be found in Appendix 4 where one can see both category codes (Level 2 codes) and sub-themes (Level 3 codes) created from them.

### *Interpretation of data*

This phase implies that, for example, data arrays or some other types of data representation need to be interpreted. The interpretations are indeed subjective, meaning that the interpretation of the same data array may depend on the person who makes the interpretation. (ibid., 207.) The author of this study aimed at following the principles which are supposed to be followed in this phase in accordance to Yin (2011) by giving rich quotations, following the logic of the beginning and the end, tried to give some own insights into data.

### *Conclusions*

This phase is a last and closing phase of the analysis. It is separately covered in the discussion chapter.

## 4 Results

As previously mentioned, the themes were initially predetermined. Thus, a structured interview guide determined the scope of the themes. However, each theme starts with the words “perceptions and embodiment” since the author does not aim at estimating the level of TEI in teams and concentrates on reflecting on the participants’ points of view through a holistic-like approach. Inductive analysis was conducted in order to formulate sub-themes within a pre-set theme. Thus, the sub-themes were driven by the data and emerged from it. Thematic networks are provided within each theme. These networks reflect themes, sub-themes, categories and initial codes. Thematic networks help to visualize the conducted analysis. The author did not include all emerged initial codes in order not to overcrowd the thematic networks. Only the most relevant codes for the category codes were pointed out.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, there were two units of analysis within this case study (Team A and Team B). At first, the author separately generated categories for Team A and for Team B. Then these categories were analyzed together by using a matrix (see Appendix 4). Afterwards, overall sub-themes were created based on categories from both teams. Thus, the thematic networks reflect the overall analysis and a matrix indicates categories for each team.

### 4.1 Perceptions and embodiment of “interpersonal understanding”

The theme of “interpersonal understanding” includes the sub-themes of “established processes and communication” and “social awareness”. These sub-themes emerged from four category codes. The thematic network represented by Figure 8 below shows the way in which the sub-themes emerged.



Figure 8. Thematic network on the perceptions and embodiment of "interpersonal understanding", made by the author

### Established processes and communication

Both teams covered the sub-theme “established processes and communication” although this sub-theme had its own features for each team. Team A members noticed that both the physical environment of an open space, means of communication, and the established way of sharing information or the standardized system provided a good ground for effective communication between the team members. The open space, for example, contributed positively to the prevalence of personal face-to-face interactions. All these aspects could be named as established processes. It can be concluded that the organization contributed to these processes meaning that organizational factor affected the team communication standards. A standardized system facilitated knowing each other’s professional needs and concerns without any particular problems or difficulties despite the team’s multiculturalism.

*“We had quite a big team, we were in one open space, thus it was easier to solve out some problem, it was easy just to talk without using emails, skypes or something like that”. (Participant 1)*

*“It was very cooperative, established processes... We had like multiple structures, databases where we shared different topics, work results. Work results have to be displayed somewhere anyways. Then if everyone enters the work results in some database, already it is the way to share information. But I guess this is a minimum to have in a team...”(Participant 2)*

*“At least in IT business communication is quite standardized; the whole thing is already solved, well-managed communication within the team, Kanban system. They early realized that one of the big challenges for them is communication... For example, exchanging information is important. In IT even physical open office supports communication, that's why they don't have walls...” (Participant 3)*

Additionally the pre-set way of sharing through a standardized system contributed to high proactivity in sharing knowledge and the ways of solving daily work related problems. This sharing is linked to the understanding of the team members' needs. All three Team A members pointed out that mainly all the colleagues were open and eager to share information with the others.

*“Basically everybody was doing their work and where there was some important information to share about some problems or obstacles, or ways how to do something better it was shared very easily and actively. A person may say “Hey, I know how to do it better” or the person was going around and asking usually getting some answer from colleagues.” (Participant 2)*

*“Everything happens and immediately it is said out, “Hey we have this, that”. It is open communication in all levels and it is discussed. Information is often exchanged in immediate levels”. (Participant 3)*

On rare occasions, however, the team faced some minor situations in which information was not shared between the team members due to some reasons as Participant 1 pointed out:

*“Of course, there were some situations, when information was not transferred, and other team members just spent time to solve problems which in principle were solved before”. (Participant 1)*

Participant 1 additionally underlined that despite standardized systems and good face-to-face communication among the team members, there seemed to be a lack of understanding and interaction with the managers. Lack of personal communication

was perceived as a desire to keep distance. In these types of situations, the standardized system did not play any role and the managers themselves needed to be more active in communication which did not happen in reality. In principle, this finding is aligned with the management factor, which also influences team culture:

*“As for the team members there was no need to improve the communication so much, since we were in one space. Managers kept more distance. With them the main transfer of info was through emails. Maybe the managers wanted to keep distance.” (Participant 1)*

Participant 2 expressed an opinion close to that of Participant 1 and compared the interaction between the team members and between the team members and the managers as:

*“I would say communication within a team was quite good. I’m not sure if communication within a team needed to be improved, maybe the higher management was not much aware what was going on. They communicated sometimes not in the most straightforward way or only when it was too late. But on the level of communication within a team I don’t see much room for improvement”. (Participant 2)*

Despite a lack of interactions between the team members and managers, the team itself was cohesive as both Participant 1 and 2 already expressed and a team identity was established as Participant 3 summarized:

*“In a team we were quite ok, we knew each other, each other's hobby. This is important to share some personal interests, this helps to build communication within a team. This is why we were a good team”. (Participant 3)*

Team B members did not directly point out particular systems, such as presented, for example, by Kanban, or any other way of how communication was “standardized” that were applicable to Team A. The fact that Team B members did not mention any systems could be understood by looking at the differences in the team companies’ context, different needs, the goals of teams and the size of both teams. In a bigger team, there is more need for standardized solutions than in a smaller team.

For example, Participant 4 from Team B pointed out that everyone could find answers for the needed operational tasks and information sharing happened through meetings or by asking a colleague. Participant 6 added that information exchange could occur in many ways:



*“...We do have emails, whatever, agendas, meeting memos...I don’t find these tools any better than simple words what you do when you are drinking a cup of coffee.” (Participant 6)*

Participant 5 said that in principle, the responsibilities were clear and everyone had their own clients. The same person, however, admitted that in spite of existing communication patterns there was still a lack of communication and a need to foster the exchange of opinions, news, and information about the market situation and many other issues. Participant 6 highlighted that only the most important and relevant information needed to be transferred since large amounts of information would simply distract everyone from their tasks. The same interviewee also pointed out that since, on a general level, interactions in the companies would occur between people, it would be impossible to reach a perfect level of communication from the overall point of view:

*“... We have good communication to do that [achieve the goal]...Communication should always be improved but by itself human communication is also imperfect, there will never be a point when communication is perfect...” (Participant 6)*

Participant 5 expressed the opinion that all team members including the team leader or manager might need to participate in building a ground for communication since relations had a direct impact on work:

*“...One can say that it’s a leader’s task to “open up” a person... but it’s a team so that my participation in that is also obligatory... interpersonal relations have a direct impact on the work...” (Participant 5)*

In summary, these results show that the context of the companies has a direct impact on sharing information and knowledge. Team A participants attributed good communication to the office layout and developed the Kanban system. In the eyes of these interviewees, cultural diversity did not cause any major problems in communication as far as work-related matters were concerned. The interviewees acknowledged that the team members were cooperative and open to each other, as far as work-related situations were concerned. In Team A, the organizational factor played a positive role in supporting communication and understanding of the team members’ needs. Team B thought all the team members needed to be active in

building a basis for communication. However, building communication was not seen as the simplest task due to human differences.

### Social awareness in a team

People and teams are two inseparable notions. Human aspects may be highly important for the team and the team members' relationships, which in the end may have a positive or negative effect on the work outcomes as well. This sub-theme of "social awareness in a team" was widely covered in both teams. Together these results provided insights how social awareness was perceived and actually occurred in the teams.

Participants from Team A showed that their team members were mainly sensitive to the others. All the interviewees from Team A thought that it was allowed to show negative emotions to some extent at the workplace. However, a source of these negative emotions needed to be found and understood and probably explained to others, when it was appropriate. "Being polite" could be considered as a standard key to a proper behavior in a team.

Team B members underlined that negative emotions needed to be noticed in order to prevent their effect on the relationships within a team. Practically all the interviewees expressed confidence in being socially aware team members. A team leader was considered as the one who needed to play an important role in creating atmosphere that would encourage the team members to be more open and attentive to each other. Apart from that, social awareness was seen as a relevant factor on the way to goal achievement through team members understanding and trustful relationships with each other.

As far as Team A is concerned, Participant 3 perceived human aspects which appear in a team in a positive way by appreciating togetherness of a team and adjusting one's own behavior for the teamwork needs:

*"This is one of the benefits of working in the team, team do allow team members to share this human aspects with team members to certain level. You cannot be a total narcissistic person or loner in a team, it will make your life in a team difficult." (Participant 3)*

Additionally, Participant 3 mentioned that the human aspects could be seen as letting out own negative emotions to some extent at the workplace. This expression of emotions was understood as a natural way for people and needed to be accepted:

*"If someone is having a bad day, then the person is having a bad day, letting out emotions is human and can be allowed but to certain level in my opinion". (Participant 3)*

Participant 1 and Participant 3 from Team A also underlined that one needed to notice negative emotions of others in a team and think how to approach this person or how to help this team member:

*"When the person is in a bad mood it's better to wait and ask later or ask someone else. Or maybe vice a versa there is a need to come to this person more often to comfort this person." (Participant 1)*

*"...Work itself is a source of stress, we need to observe if some person is not having a good day you need to try at least to make his or her day lighter, take some tasks or simply ask how the person is feeling." (Participant 3)*

Participant 2 from Team A opened up some thoughts on the allowed extent of being in a bad or negative state and its acceptance by the other colleagues:

*"We cannot just leave all our feelings at the door when we enter the company. If somebody has a difficult family situation, maybe it is talked about and everyone is aware of it. It is hard to say where the border is... But if I slept badly at night, should I mention it or should anybody take care of me then, difficult question". (Participant 2)*

As far as Team B is concerned, Participant 4 noted that one should be cautious about the emotional state of others since awareness could prevent the working relationships from being damaged:

*"...If a person is not in the moods... then one shall not bring him or her to the limits...if someone is in a sour mood, than you can take it personally and then relationships may go wrong maybe not for eternity but it may affect the work...or sometimes one moment can affect the whole relationships." (Participant 4)*

Participant 6 from Team B underlined that being aware of others' emotional states might help to build understanding and trust in a team in the pursuit to reach the target:

*“...It’s very important to know them [moods] more deeply, how they [team members] are feeling, what is the mood and the general feelings, in the effort to achieve a goal you need to have people to understand, to know each other and trust each other”. (Participant 6)*

Participant 1 from Team A, however, pointed out that the quality of being sensitive to others’ moods and considering other team members’ moods differed from person to person. Participant 1 summarized:

*“It is more like individual way. Some people didn’t care so much about the moods. The main qualities were professional, how quick you accomplish the work and with which quality. Though some managers paid attention to that when the work was not done on time”. (Participant 1)*

Participant 2 from Team A also highlighted that one needed to take into consideration the other person and adjust own communication style accordingly. However, a general rule of being polite could be a standard for communication in a “good” team:

*“So if you are working for a while, you know how to talk to different people in different ways, for example a man would talk differently to another man than to another woman. In a way if you are a long time in a team you will talk differently to each team member, you will not talk to anyone in the same way... You might notice also differences in the moods, in general if you don’t know the team or you are in the beginning of a team work, how can you know the moods, you cannot take it into account. You can just be polite in general... I guess if you are nice to the people, then it is not needed to have special regard to the mood in the current day, for example. That what you should do in a good team anyway”. (Participant 2)*

Participant 5 from Team B also noticed that a team leader should be the one who needed to be particularly aware and attentive to the emotional states of team members in order to build the constructive atmosphere in a team. This thought is linked to the management factor, meaning that the managers can impact team culture.

*“For a leader it’s important [to take into consideration moods of team members], the leader is a driver, apart from understanding, a team leader needs to direct these moods”. (Participant 5)*

Additionally, Participant 2 from Team A suggested that normally people would tend to share emotions and feelings depending on the status (whether it is a team member or a team leader) and trust level. Sharing feelings about work-related issues with one's manager or team leader seems to be more challenging than with the other team members. Though sharing of own feelings with own team members may have negative consequences as well.

*“You will not always share your feelings about work with the boss maybe unless, when you have a long experience with the boss and you know how to approach him or her, and with the colleagues it is of course easier to share your feelings about the work whether it is going well or badly and what could be done better. Of course there is always a risk if you share too much information that will have a negative impact on you and especially if you share some information, some feelings how you see your coworkers, it is a big risk... to talk about team member. It depends how much trust is within team members, even in a good team you may trust some people more, and some people less. If there is more trust, you share more. Usually you trust your friends more than co-workers. If your co-workers become your friends, of course they will share more”. (Participant 2)*

These results suggested that mainly all participants from both teams acknowledged that being aware of others and showing interest to others needed to be a natural part in the teamwork. In Team A there appeared a remark that in comparison to the team members, some managers in practice did not show high levels of social awareness though.

#### 4.2 Perceptions and embodiment of “confronting members who break norms”

The theme of “confronting members who break norms” includes one sub-theme that was formulated as “finding team consensus”. This sub-theme was coined from three category codes such as “finding solutions together”, “eliminating stress” and “cultural differences”.

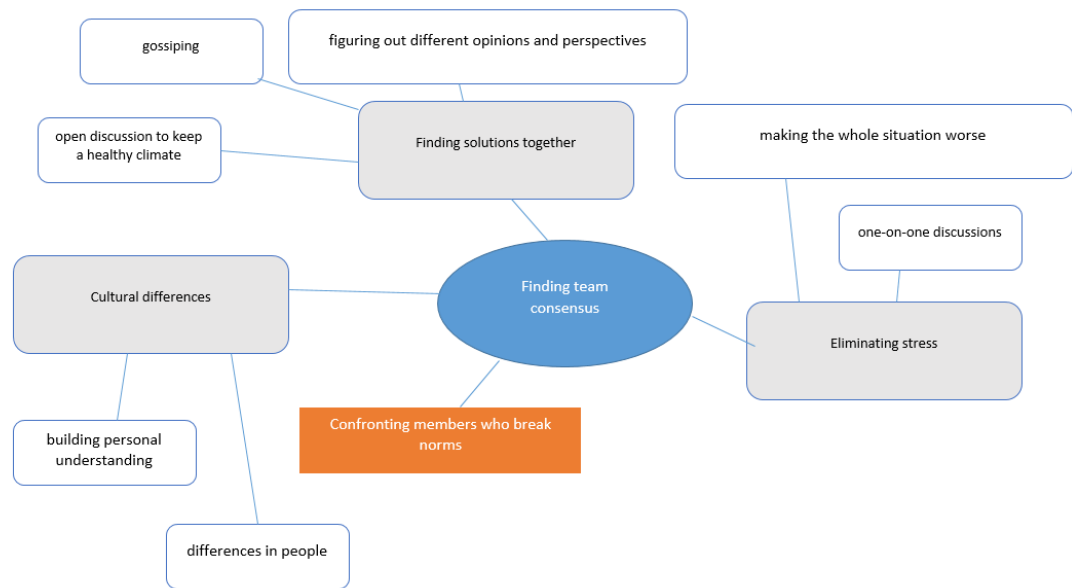


Figure 9. Thematic network on the perceptions and embodiment of “confronting members who break norms”, made by the author

### Finding team consensus

Team A expressed opinion that in some cases some kind of divergent behavior could be approached by the whole team. However, cultural diversity and appropriateness of these discussions needed to be carefully evaluated. Every interviewee though considered the importance of addressing the issue of breaking some set of rules, in other words confrontation was accepted. The openness in the discussion can release stress and help to find out attitudes of all the members. One participant tried to settle down challenging matters through the personal approach to people. In practice, however, Team A most often used one-on-one meetings to handle the issue. Team B definitely preferred one-on-one meetings to open discussions as a team. A team leader’s role in the situation of “non-compliant” behavior was emphasized.

Participant 1 from Team A outlined that in the multicultural teams some team members could feel uncomfortable when the whole team handled a situation when some person broke the “norms” of a team. Thus, cultural differences in a team should be remembered and taken into consideration, when someone wanted to

initiate a team discussion. Participant 1 said that only in some special cases a team could address issues of behavior together and find solutions mutually:

*"We had quite an international team, in some cultures this kind of open discussion may be perceived badly, to discuss together. Maybe only in some cases it can be used to find some solution together as a team".*  
(Participant 1)

Participant 2 from Team A expressed a similar idea that it was more appropriate when some other team member who had good communication skills could approach the person who behaved in a "non-compliable way". The only reason to have a team discussion would be to figure out different opinions and perspectives of all team members:

*"...The question is whether discussion as a whole team may be useful...only in a sense, that everybody can say that it is unacceptable or not, give opinions..."* (Participant 2)

Participant 2 also pointed out that the situations of "non-compliable" behavior should be definitely addressed and clarified but not just "forgotten". Otherwise, team members would be prone to "handle" these matters in some form of gossiping:

*"If somebody behaves unacceptably, I think everybody will talk about it for sure... but how to handle it...If there is some incident or situation, everybody will talk about that. You talk with the person sitting next to you or during lunch or in the kitchen..."* (Participant 2)

Likewise, Participant 3 from Team A gave opinion that the "divergent" behavior should be addressed since other team members could be stressed because of it in the same way. In order to keep a healthy climate in a team issues should be handled and an open discussion organized in some form.

*"...If one person behaved in a weird way, there is a reason behind it normally. You are not the only one who feel stress because of this happening. You should start the discussion that this incident or situation make the other members of the team feel like... it helps to resolve things quickly, not to put it under the carpet, this needs to be open. Open conversation is needed".* (Participant 3)

Participant 1 from Team A mentioned that their team indeed did not have much experience with the team members who in some or another way behaved against the "norms". Participant 1 though underlined that in most cases discussions were held on one-on-one basis between a team member and a team leader (manager):

*“...If this kind of situations happened, this type of conversations were between a manager and an employee who behaves in an unaccepted way... In our team we didn’t face so much this type of situations though”. (Participant 1)*

Participant 3 from the same Team A, however, actively tried to find approach to the persons who behaved in a “divergent” way through building personal understanding. This person was initiative to approach the matter as soon as possible and not wait when the problem grew into a serious issue. This could possibly explain one of the reasons why Participant 1 mentioned that their team did not face any big issues with the “non-compliable” behavior.

*“...I always tried to open up boundaries between people, chemistry starts through personal interests or hobbies”. (Participant 3)*

As far as Team B is concerned, Participant 4 mentioned that an open discussion could possibly bring harm to the already formed relationships since people were different. The interviewee gave focus to the team leader’s role in being attentive to some negatively outstanding behaviors and activity in solving the matters:

*“...Much depends on people, their character and perceptions and this discussion may break some already formed relations. In these situations the leader needs to play an important role here, first of all the leader needs to notice the situation and try to correct it, not in front of everyone and not alone, but trying to help to change something”. (Participant 4)*

Participant 5 did not specify who might need to take measures in addressing “divergent behavior” but felt uncomfortable in keeping open conversations on the issue due to the high stress level that could occur in these situations. This interviewee would prefer to eliminate stress.

*“...I would say that one-on-one basis it’s better...for a person it will be stressful”. (Participant 5)*

*“...Team members are different and I think this approach [addressing behavior as a team] won’t be effective in our team”. (Participant 5)*

Participant 6 was of the close opinion and said that “non-compliable” behavior should be discussed in the face-to-face meetings with a team leader (manager) since a team discussion would not be appropriate way for that. This interviewee also was



cautious about the open discussions since they might make the whole situation worse.

*“...It [behavior] needs to be discussed with the manager... not be doing it through team meeting to discuss team members attitude, since the situation may become worse, I would do on one-on-one basis...”*  
(Participant 6)

Overall, these results indicate that Team A was more ready to handle the issues of confronting members openly in comparison to Team B under the condition that this confrontation would be for the best of the whole team and would have attributes of the constructive confrontation. Team B showed consensus as far as one-on-one meetings were concerned, thinking that this was the only appropriate form of the confrontation in their team.

If one compares all six interviewees, only one person, namely Participant 3 from Team A, showed full confidence concerning an open discussion and was sure that it was better than one-on-one meetings or conversations. Additionally, this person was the only one who actively tried to resolve some delicate situations. It needs to be noted though, that the consensus among the team members to have open discussions might eliminate gossiping between colleagues as Participant 2 underlined.

#### 4.3 Perceptions and embodiment of “caring behavior”

The theme of “caring behavior” consists of two sub-themes, namely “healthy climate in a team through sharing, empathy, feedback and acknowledgement” and “work-related opinions easier to respect”. The below thematic network gives more details on the category codes (Level 2 codes) and smaller units (Level 1 codes).

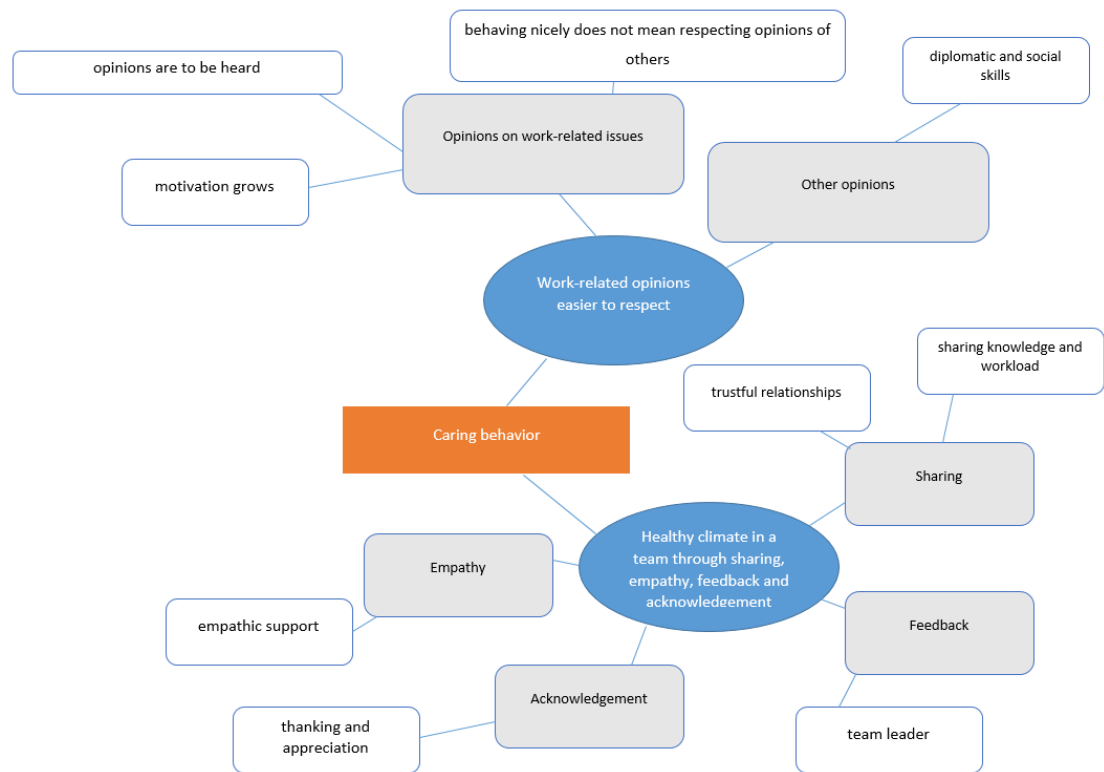


Figure 10. Thematic network on the perceptions and embodiment of “caring behavior”, made by the author

### Healthy climate in a team through sharing, empathy, feedback and acknowledgement

Team A members had a cohesive opinion about sharing information and giving moral support to the team members. The moral support could help to resolve some matters that bothered some people. However, the moral support would be more naturally to occur if trust was already developed between the team members. By helping the team members, the climate in the team becomes better that in the end brings benefits to the whole team’s outcome. All Team B participants agreed that their team members naturally provided support on finding information or needed tools to accomplish tasks. Caring behavior appeared in versatile ways in Team A through forms of the emotional, informational and instrumental support. In Team B forms of the instrumental support prevailed.

Participant 1 from Team A underlined that sharing knowledge made the team cohesive and solid. Eagerness to support the team members created a healthy climate in a team. Team climate was understood as an important factor for the well-being of the team members:

*“Advices are helpful... It makes the team cohesive. A healthy atmosphere in the team is important... Of course, you can come to work just to accomplish tasks, but taking into account the fact that we spend lots of time at work, a healthy climate is important. To have a healthy climate support is needed. Actually, in our team support was natural. People were eager to give support.” (Participant 1)*

Participant 2 from Team A enumerated a long list of versatile ways of sharing information and workload. Additionally, Participant 2 pointed out the moral support, which helped the team members release stress that in the end would result in better work outcomes. However, it was commented by the same interviewee that the moral support could only occur if the team members had trustful relationships.

*“...If you have good relations to the people, some trust then you can discuss private matters with them, which can free their mind. If you have no private worries, then you for sure more focused on work”. (Participant 2)*

Participant 3 from Team A expressed a similar opinion on the importance of flexibility as far as work-related issues were concerned and added that having some time together out of work contributed a lot into relationships between the team members. Apart from that, Participant 3 mentioned that it was also helpful to have formally predefined structure on the needed back-ups and compensations. A predefined structure brings certainty to the team members, which in the end promotes caring behavior in a team. The issue of predefined structure relates to organizational factors which impact team culture.

*“As a human being we need to be flexible, outside work also, providing your time is important.” (Participant 3)*

*“It [support] was quite good, because we were well-structured. It is helpful to have well-structured team. Based on that we create a culture of work”. (Participant 3)*

All Team A members mentioned that the persons in their team showed empathy towards the others. Participant 2 managed to spot versatile ways of detecting states

of moods of the team members and commented on the empathic behavior of a team member / the team members. Participant 3 also identified the situation when the team members were in need for the empathic support.

*“...Even I remember when somebody was openly crying at work, it can just happen. Then of course, a person who is close to that person goes and comforts...” (Participant 2)*

*“You will notice that the other team members are more focused, they would spend less time in a coffee room, a bit more focused, tensed. This is the indicator. You could ask what you can share or you can sympathize, to give mental support”. (Participant 3)*

As far as Team B is concerned, the emotional and appraisal support types were mentioned as the ones which needed to be still developed. The main type of support that actually occurred in a team was the instrumental support. Participant 4 put emphasis on the team leader’s role to support the team members by giving them the feedback on the work-related matters. Participant 6 in the same way also concentrated on the team leader’s role in providing needed knowledge and skills for the team members.

*“...Support in the way that you are going in the right direction, then it shall be team leader to provide it”. (Participant 4)*

*“...Manager needs to be a facilitator to provide what is needed, maybe tools, knowledge. To make sure that in the future cases there are tools and skills to deal with challenges”. (Participant 6)*

Participant 5 mentioned that it might be good to be interested in the other team members’ workload and ask other colleagues if they needed help. Thus, the support was shown in the form of inquiry.

*“...Sometimes it’s enough to come and ask... “How can I help you? What still needs to be done?” I also come to some colleague and ask what I can do to help. Also the other team member also asks me about that”. (Participant 5)*

The acknowledgement as a category appeared in Team A members’ interviews. Participant 1 and Participant 3 both underlined that acknowledgement could bring the feeling of achievement.

*“...There is also a need to thank a person who contributed the most or whose solution to the problem was chosen. Sometimes it is good to emphasize some name in a team”. (Participant 1)*

*“...You need to make the team member feel that he or she achieves something, give appreciation”. (Participant 3)*

Participant 5 from Team B also highlighted the importance of thanking a team member or their team members for their efforts and results that could be considered as a form of acknowledgement:

*“...It’s also possible to say “thank you for your teamwork” or then simply “thank you”. (Participant 5)*

Taken together, these results suggested that all the participants viewed caring behavior as being needed for a good teamwork. However, it has been noticed though that the points of view differ regarding what caring behavior is. Caring behavior is a multi-facet term and some aspects of it may be probably valued differently depending on the cultural background of the persons.

### **Work-related opinions easier to respect**

Team A members underlined that there could be two types of opinions which might occur at the workplace, namely opinions about work-related issues and opinions on the other themes e.g. religion, politics etc. Opinions on the work-related matters may include project’s progress, work results etc. All the team members admitted that work-related opinions were to be taken into consideration and respected by default.

Participant 1 pointed out that the work-related opinions were expressed and discussed in their team. However, the ones who were more active in formulating their ideas were in a more favorable position in comparison with those who were not active in speaking up. It was also added that some team members were more emotionally expressive about the opinions, which were not in line with them. This could be possibly understood through explicit versus implicit communication types.

*“In the cases when there was a need to discuss some problem related to the project, opinions were heard of those who were active in speaking up. In order to find out solution, it was however useful to take opinions of all the team members, even newer ones”. (Participant 1)*

Participant 2 also highlighted that the team members needed to find a mutual opinion on the work-related matters or tasks and act in accordance to it, if it was agreed in that way. Participant 3 was confident that the opinions were to be heard

and taken into account since one technical issue could be solved out in the versatile ways by default. It was noticed though, that there was some limitation on how to solve some technical problems because of the field they worked. This limitation actually helped when different opinions were discussed.

As mentioned, the interviewees in Team A considered that sometimes the persons also faced other opinions at work, which did not have a direct relation to the work tasks. This type of opinions may challenge communication and relation between the team members. Participant 1 said that culturally diverse team members most probably were prone to share different views. Handling of different opinions was a highly delicate issue that required diplomatic skills from the team members. Participant 3 also said that addressing some other opinions, which were not in a direct relation to work, required good social skills.

*“There are always people who give own opinions on different topics no matter if these opinions lead to some conflicts or not. In our team, we had these people. Actually, it is understandable because our team members came from different countries with different religious, political and other backgrounds. Team members may represent different points of views. The other issue is how you present your perspective. You may be straightforward and joke in a harsh way. However, this type of behavior may be perceived like rude. Or if the previous evening something happened in the world and was shown in news, then the next day people were discussing that. I tried to be diplomatic and not to talk that much about contradictory topics... Mainly team members behaved properly and we did not have large arguments, which would affect our work... People need to feel what is appropriate to say and what cannot be said. So you need to remember it.” (Participant 1)*

*“Outside that [outside work-related opinions] it is more difficult since it depends on team members' social skills”. (Participant 3)*

Participant 2 emphasized that in these sensitive situations the team members managed to control their own emotions successfully. However, Participant 2 pointed out that behaving nicely did not mean respecting the opinions of others.

*“...It depends how emotional people are about some opinions or subjects. If they are very emotional about some subjects, they can even lose some respect, they can openly show that they lost the respect or they lose it but still behave properly. I'm sure it happened when subconsciously respect was lost. I think there is a difference of showing the respect and having the respect. I am sure that some people didn't have respect to someone else, but they were not just showing it very*

*openly. They tried to behave properly, they were interested in the teamwork in that sense. They were putting their feelings [negative feelings] under needs for the team". (Participant 2)*

Team B members only covered the work-related opinions. Participant 4 valued diversity in team members' opinions and said that this diversity might contribute to the efficient decision-making. Participant 6 commented that the team members' motivation could grow when there was a possibility to express opinions.

*"...Opinions need to be diverse, and one needs to treat with respect the opinions of other team members. You can bring your opinion whether you agree upon something or not. I'm against when someone affirms that it's only like this ...everyone needs to have one own opinion... with the help of many opinions, one opinion can be formed, the right one. It's important that opinions of many people is taken into account. If you give your opinion, and someone sees that you are wrong, then of course one needs to give evidences in order to explain why it is like that". (Participant 4)*

*"There are many ways to show respect, people need to be listened and if some opinion is even better than the current opinion or the guideline of working, then yes. By recognizing that people have good ideas, it encourages people to express opinions in the future". (Participant 6)*

In summary, these results showed that culturally diverse teams may have quite versatile opinions on wide spectrum of themes, starting from the work-related topics and finishing with other matters, which do not directly relate to work. Other themes need to be handled in a delicate way in order to eliminate the personal conflicts. In order to approach these topics appropriately, the team members need to possess relevant social skills.

#### 4.4 Perceptions and embodiment of "team self-evaluation"

The theme of "team self-evaluation" is comprised of one sub-theme "one-on-one meetings vs. form of teamwork". The sub-theme consists of four category codes ("fresh team needs to have team self-evaluation", "team self-evaluation efficiency", "one-on-one meetings vs. team discussions regarding interactions", and "tasks dynamics"). The below thematic network opens up sub-categories through the other smaller codes.

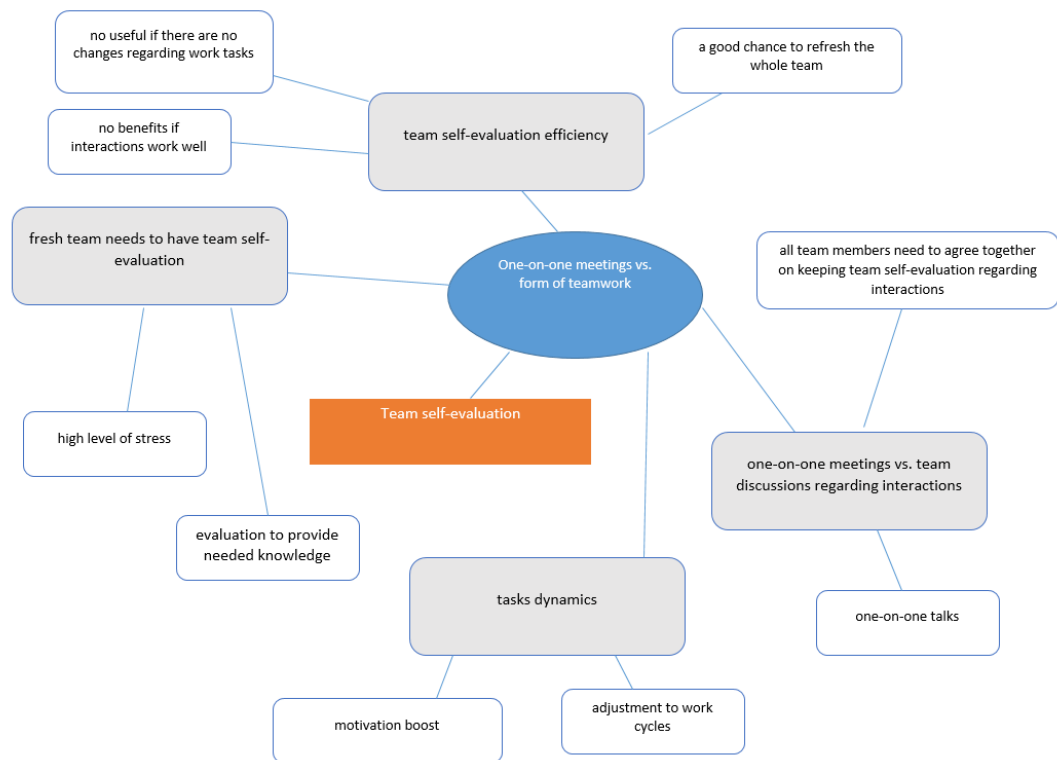


Figure 11. Thematic network on the perceptions and embodiment of “team self-evaluation”, made by the author

### One-on-one meetings vs. form of teamwork

Team A members gave different points of view on the need to discuss the team’s strengths and weaknesses as far as interactions between the team members and teams’ goals and tasks were concerned. Team self-evaluation of interactions between the team members was seen as valuable only by Participant 3. It was particularly noticed that more attention could be given to the communication in new teams:

*“...This [evaluation] will help to build work culture and team maturity. In the old team structure is clear, in a young team there is more need for that. New team is fresh and fast, stress level in a new team is higher, they try to learn fast new tasks and team members.” (Participant 3)*

Participant 2 was cautious about the idea of talking openly about the team members’ way of interacting with each other. Additionally, the interviewee did not see any benefits of team self-evaluation when all the aspects of relationships worked well.



Participant 1 summarized that in their team these practices of evaluation were not straightforwardly applied.

*"I think you cannot influence interactions between team members, not so much from the top. You can give some general rules that can improve something or can something worse even. But I don't know if it can be influenced. If everything is good than no discussion is needed. If it's bad than it's too late, and members may not be interested to improve it anymore. There is a risk of blaming someone". (Participant 2)*

*"...Our team had a strength of being multicultural. We didn't have these conversations though, all went fine. Only in one-on-one level maybe. Only when some problem happened". (Participant 1)*

Team A members considered team self-evaluation of the tasks and goals more important. Tasks' dynamics need to be taken into account. Probably Team A did not face any problematic issues regarding interactions and overall communication in the team. Participant 2 noticed that this type of evaluation should be adjusted to the work cycles or some other needs of the team, such as clients' inquiries, structural changes etc. Participant 3 highlighted that this type of evaluation actually might have a positive effect on the team members motivation levels.

*"...Team needs to agree what the strategy of the team is, it needs to be discussed. Regularly in the sense, when there is a change then it needs to be discussed. Of course, it's possible to have some regular meetings when some work results need to be delivered... A new cycle of results is a change or when there are some structural changes when you need to redistribute the time, when there are... requests from clients, it needs to be discussed how it influences the work". (Participant 2)*

*"It needs to be discussed regularly, the team performance, goals and a process, yes, it needs to be discussed regularly. It is a good chance to refresh the whole team by pushing them through new goals, a kind of check". (Participant 3)*

Participant 1 and Participant 2 expressed the idea that the way how team self-evaluation was organized was crucial for this evaluation's efficiency. Team self-evaluation in their case was made on a regular basis, however, it did not seem to be always useful since the same persons showed activity and others were just in the role of listeners. Additionally, the big size of the team did not contribute to the efficient team self-evaluation.

*"...I think the size of the team matters... in a big team normally only some people speak up, so others will be just seating and listening". (Participant 1)*

*"We had regular meetings, once a week. Many things were discussed there. Sometimes it was too big group for some people to speak up and say their opinions because not everybody is comfortable to speak in a big group even if they know them. It ended up that always the same people were talking...Those meetings were sometimes useful but not often. If nothing changed from the previous meeting, then it is a waste of time". (Participant 2)*

Team B members also expressed quite different points of views regarding team self-evaluation. The only interviewee who viewed team self-evaluation of the team members' interaction useful was Participant 4. The person contemplated a problem on one-on-one meetings vs. team discussions regarding the interactions. This interviewee very clearly pointed out two conditions when this type of team self-evaluation could be possible to organize. The first one is a consensus of all the team members to have the evaluation. The evaluation needs to be hold in a constructive way without blaming anyone. The target of this evaluation is to improve the interactions. The second condition is applicable when a team leader notices some behaviors and wants to address them. The main point in both conditions is mutual agreement of all the team members.

Participant 5 would prefer to have this type of evaluation on a personal basis in the form of one-on-one talks in order to avoid any type of offence or insult for any team member. It was also highlighted that this type of evaluation could be seen as a "delicate issue" to be approached in a small team. In a bigger team it would be less challenging to have this evaluation. Participant 6 thought that this type of evaluation was not necessary to have since it could not be seen as the most relevant aspect in achieving the goal in the teamwork.

*"I don't think it needs to be conducted as a teamwork, for the avoidance of "infringement" of some person. If some starts to talk about weaknesses of some persons...It will be difficult to handle like this, because it's a small team. If it is a big team, then yes, it will be possible to generalize and talk about strengths and weaknesses. In a small team you will point out to particular persons". (Participant 5)*

*"...At the end... communication is not the only target to achieve the goal... it's important but we have many things to do... Communication is*

*not the main objective, the main objective is to achieve the targets...”*  
(Participant 6)

As far as the team self-evaluation of the tasks and goals is concerned, then Participant 4 and Participant 5 expressed close ideas of necessity to have evaluation checks on tasks’ dynamics quite regularly. Participant 4 saw this type of evaluation as having regular feedback and Participant 5 underlined that motivation can be boosted thanks to these practices. Apart from that, Participant 5 thought that new team members definitely would need more information to provide them with the needed knowledge. Additionally, this interviewee pointed out to the changes in the action plan, which could be seen as a reason or explanation to have this evaluation. Both participants approached this evaluation as a form of teamwork. Participant 4 said that they had some meetings or discussions mainly focusing on the aspects of improvement. Participant 5 also commented that some meetings were held to share information.

*“A team has one goal, that’s why everyone needs to understand whether you do everything in a right way, direction.”* (Participant 4)

*“...For motivation, for understanding where we are moving to. Our action plan, who is doing what. Tasks clarity...”* (Participant 5)

Participant 6 saw this evaluation as a face-to-face development discussion to be organized once a year. It was also added that any team would need to reach some mutual understanding of the team’s situation.

*“..It is not necessary to do it often, maybe once a year, like in this development discussion, at least once in a year, but it’s not necessary to do it all the time...It’s more important that team understands the current situation and the target and by that will create it’s own tasks, ideas”.* (Participant 6)

Taken together, these results suggested that team self-evaluation was seen as relevant. Team B members preferred to have evaluation on the team interactions in the form of one-on-one conversations. Team A actually had regular meetings during which some team members naturally initiated self-evaluation on the interactions. However, the efficiency of this evaluation needs to be remembered in order not to spend time just for talking without any actions or measures afterwards. Goals, tasks, team performance evaluations are regarded as crucial issues for any teamwork. With

the help of this team self-evaluation it is also possible to increase the motivation levels.

#### 4.5 Perceptions and embodiment of “creating resources for working with emotion”

The theme of "creating resources for working with emotions" consists of one sub-theme “discussions are good but measures to be taken afterwards”. This sub-theme consists of two category codes: “meetings are good but actions need to be taken afterwards” and “negative emotions create stress”. The thematic network provides more detailed information on how the sub-themes appeared.

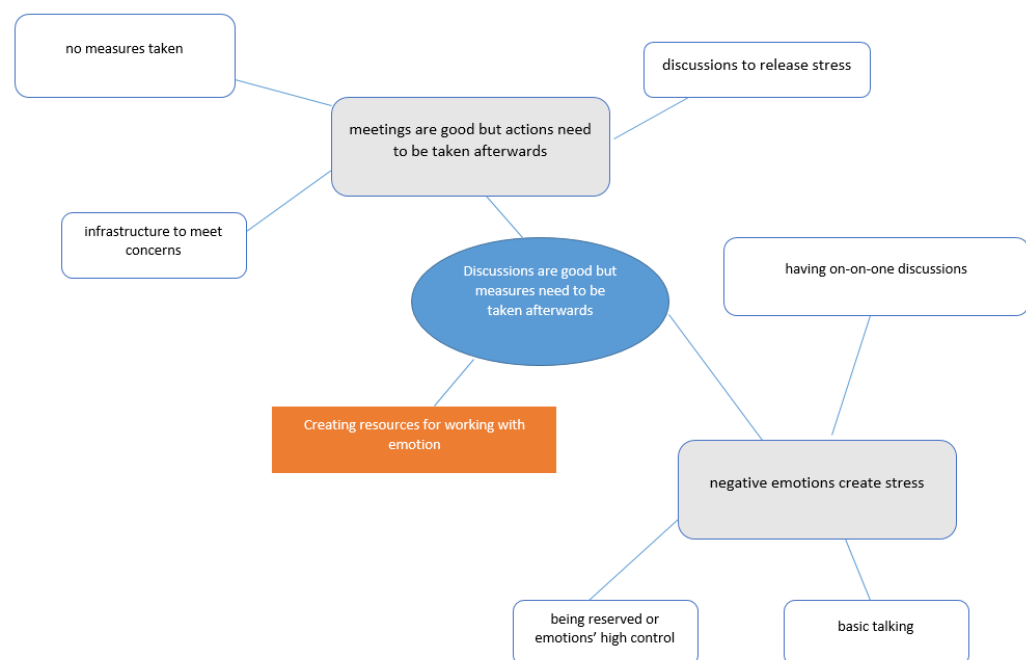


Figure 12. Thematic network on the perceptions and embodiment of “creating resources for working with emotion”, made by the author

##### Discussions are good but measures need to be taken afterwards

Team A members thought that it was needed to address situations caused by some negative circumstances such as changes in the company situation or employees’ burn out. There should be some tools to address these issues. Participant 1 mentioned

that it should be the managers' task to initiate these measures. In their team, some discussions were organized to release stress when some changes could happen in the company. Participant 2 also expressed a close opinion on the need to organize special time when people might be dissatisfied with some work-related situations. The discussions need to be organized by a person in a managerial level. However, it needs to be remembered that in their team (as it has also been pointed out in Chapter 4.4.) some team members naturally tended to express their emotions in the regular meetings as well. It could mean that this team had regular possibilities to approach emotions. However, not everyone felt comfortable to speak up. Participant 2 also indicated that despite these discussions, no measures were taken in practice to find the solutions for those concerns (as it has also been pointed out in Chapter 4.4.). When the persons had some major concerns, some separate time could be dedicated to the talk about the issues together as a team on request as well.

*"...Sometimes the associate director had some discussion with a smaller group so that everyone had a possibility to talk about company situation. No need to have regular arrangements, only when needed. Management needs to see when there is a need for arrangements."*  
(Participant 1)

*"Not regularly. Only when there is a need for something, when you see that some people are not happy with the work situation, it is necessary to have a meeting. Otherwise no need".* (Participant 2)

Participant 3 pointed out that it should be thought in advance on how to address situations which caused the negative emotions. It was suggested to organize some infrastructure to meet possible needs well in advance. In the case of Team A this infrastructure was not much organized. Discussion could be a part of the solution but some concrete tools also could be employed. Participant 3 meant that this infrastructure should be organized by the management level members. In this respect the interviewee referred to the organizational and managerial factors:

*"A positive emotion is less dangerous than the negative emotion, the negative emotions are a concern...[there should be] the infrastructure to handle the situations when someone is burnt out, stressed or if the person want to move to some other project".* (Participant 3)

As far as Team B is concerned, Participant 5 emphasized that it might be useful to address emotions in order to learn which impact they have on work. However, it

could be handled in the form of one-on-one conversations when appropriate.

Participant 6 also highlighted that it might be enough to cover the issue in basic talking when needed. It was seen as the main approach to face the matter.

Participant 4 mentioned the need to control one's emotions and to find the way out of possible negativity without any special resources to be organized. All the interviewees tended to eliminate stress, which could be caused by talking too much about the negative emotions.

*"In one-on-one discussion yes it's possible to discuss about emotions, since I would like to learn how my emotions affect the work in a negative way... There is no need to have special meetings on that, it is enough to have some words after particular situations". (Participant 5)*

*"...If in the process of doing [working] that we talk about emotions, but not separately. On daily level, just through talking, not through meetings". (Participant 6)*

*"I would try to eliminate emotions as for work-related aspects... One needs to be more reserved as for the work-related issues..." (Participant 4)*

The results in this chapter indicated that two teams saw the theme of creating resources for working with emotions differently. Team A had undergone through own experiences when special resources for working with emotions were organized due to the circumstances in the company. Apart from that, some team members in Team A used time in the regular meetings as a resource to address emotions. This may indicate that the team members allowed to talk about that, there was no any major disregard about talking openly. It was underlined though that some measures needed to be actively taken after addressing emotions. There needs to be some practical solution to that, for example, handling the issues of a person who faced a burn-out matter, talking is not enough. Team B members were more reserved about the ideas on having special resources for the whole team. The main resource for Team B was a one-on-one talk on daily basis.

#### 4.6 Perceptions and embodiment of “creating an affirmative environment”

The theme of "creating an affirmative environment" includes one sub-theme “fair treatment, certainty and sense of humor” and three category codes: “fair treatment and acknowledgement”, “sense of humor” and “certainty”.

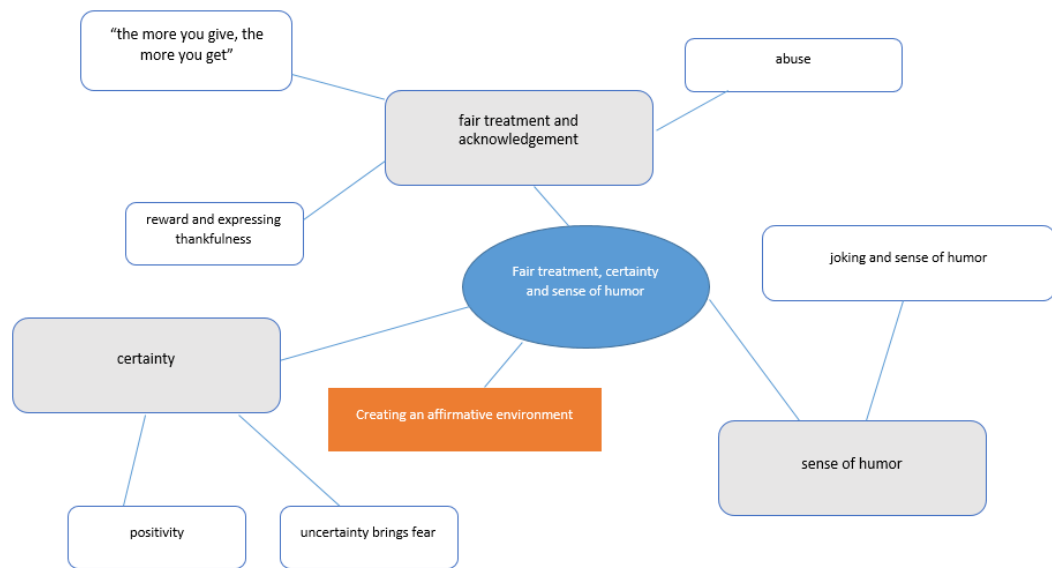


Figure 13. Thematic network on the perceptions and embodiment of “creating an affirmative environment”, made by the author

##### Fair treatment, certainty and sense of humor

All members in Team A were sure that positivity was important in any teamwork. Positivity contributes to the health climate in a team that is needed for the employees’ well-being. Fair treatment was mentioned by all three interviewees. Participant 2 highlighted that the members needed to be appreciated for their desire to contribute to the work. Participant 1 added that in practice their team faced some unequal situations when people who made high contributions to the team or company were not thanked in any form. Participant 3 also thought that the workplace principles needed to follow the saying “the more you give, the more you

get,” meaning that people were to be noticed, rewarded and appreciated for their hard work.

*“Fair treatment when people are treated fairly. People who volunteer for something are rewarded, people who are doing their job are not criticized even if it is not perfect. Fair treatment from other team members and a team leader”. (Participant 2)*

*“...Some managers were in a way abusing some employees who were volunteering a lot. A desire to help the company [from employees’ side] by sacrificing yourself so to say... And even these hours were not reported by these employees, they [employees] just wanted to contribute for the company’s benefit from good intentions...” (Participant 1)*

*“...Give promotion, some give-backs, acknowledge achievements”. (Participant 3)*

Certainty is also of high importance for keeping a positive environment in a team. Participant 3 underlined that basic principles of having a safe salary and job already would form a basement for a good environment. Actually, Participant 3 already mentioned certainty when discussing about caring behavior. Thus, this interviewee sees that the organization itself plays a considerable role in forming a positive team culture. This view was echoed by Participant 6 who said that certainty would keep affirmative moods in a team.

*“In a team it is important to stay positive all the time, despite what is happening. There maybe its ups and downs but it’s important to stay positive. It is difficult to make everybody happy, but salary needs to be safe, safety, job security...” (Participant 3)*

*“...Certainty keeps the positivity, uncertainty is what brings more conflicts and emotions...The worst when the team doesn’t know where we are standing, uncertainty brings fear... fear will bring many other emotions to the team”. (Participant 6)*

As far as Team B is concerned, sense of humor was seen as an important source for having affirmative environment at work. Participant 4 and Participant 5 both highlighted that sense of humor made difficult issues to be perceived in a better light though added that a team leader would still need to be actively promoting the positivity approach.

*“... when something happens, work or personal, through joking...” (Participant 4)*



*“...We have the same sense of humor...Sense of humor...” “If a team leader is calm and says “it’s a small thing” or makes a joke about that issue with some allegories...” (Participant 5)*

All Team B members gave a positive characteristic of their team:

*“We have a very positive team in different steps of development...” (Participant 6)*

*“...All is solved on good terms”. (Participant 4)*

*“...In principle, I feel comfortable...” (Participant 5)*

Overall, these results indicate that both teams appreciate positive environment in a teamwork. Some team members said that fair treatment (including appreciation, promotion and give-backs) were the most important aspect to be remembered (all participants from Team A). Two people (Participant 4 and Participant 5) valued sense of humor being a human feature. Two interviewees (Participant 3 and Participant 6) covered certainty. Thus, the ways of reaching the level of affirmative environment could be approached from different angles.

#### 4.7 Perceptions and embodiment of “proactive problem solving”

The theme of "proactive problem solving" consists of one sub-theme “role of a team leader” which includes two category codes: “eliminating risks, risk analysis, being open”, “team members’ role”. The thematic network below provides the structure on the sub-themes.

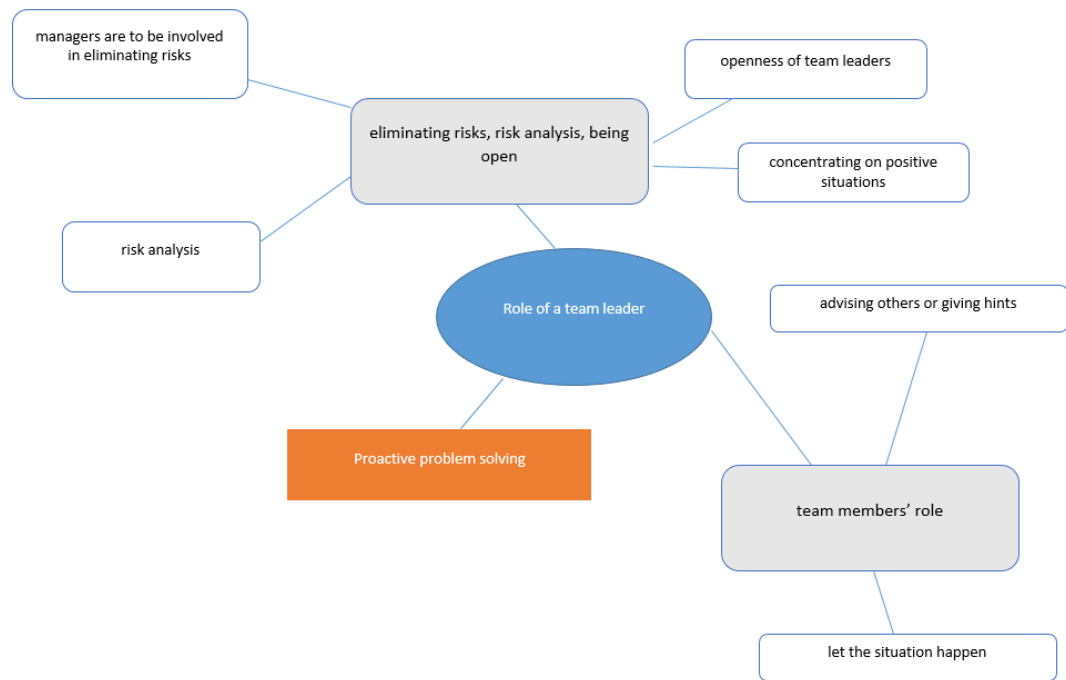


Figure 14. Thematic network on the perceptions and embodiment of “proactive problem solving”, made by the author

### Role of a team leader

Versatile points of view were expressed by Team A members in connection to proactive problem solving. Some interviewees emphasized the human aspects (relations), others underlined the work-related issues. Participant 1 concentrated on a leaders' role and indicated that the managers should be involved in eliminating risks or other unwelcome situations in connection to the tense relationships between the team members. According to Participant 1's point of view, it should be a manager's task to see unwelcome situations from the distance. However, the interviewee mentioned that these cases were not much relevant in their team, since the relations were on a good level.

*“If managers are not aware of a team climate, then it can be already late. If inside the team there are some tensions, than later it can become as a snow ball which may affect the team's and the company's result (not meeting deadlines...)... well, in our team there were no many tensions...”. (Participant 1)*

Participant 2 pointed out that a risk analysis should play quite important role in predicting negative scenarios. This analysis would serve as a ground for being certain, all the employees would feel safety. In the case of Team A there were not so many difficulties to detect possible unwelcome matters because of the work peculiarities. The managerial level employees needed to prepare risk analysis well in advance. Thus, proactive-problem solving was attributed to the managers and team members as such did not need to be involved in that.

*“You should always have a risk analysis of course, so you need to discuss if something doesn’t work, if we don’t meet a deadline... but that is more like standard working procedures, where you make an analysis of risks, other ways I wouldn’t know. If you make such an analysis, before it may not come as a shock to people”. (Participant 2)*

Participant 3 thought that the managers should be required to transfer some information on probability of some situations well in advance to the team. The team leaders should be open and challenge themselves in keeping a team spirit high in the sensitive situations. The leaders should have such qualities as honesty and ability to inspire people in difficult times. This interviewee also considered importance of the managerial and organizational factors to have a positive influence on team culture.

*“This [finding solutions proactively] will help to reduce stress and this is human. In IT business managers need to inform in advance, the team should know this kind of situations [unwelcome situations]. Fighting spirit of the team shouldn't go down, a team needs to have a very qualified leader, to be honest with the team but at the same time keep the moral of the team high”. (Participant 3)*

As far as Team B is concerned, Participant 6 gave an opposite opinion on the need to think about the negative issues, which might happen in the future. This interviewee pointed out that the manager’s role should be defined as a concentration on the positive situations. However, the same participant also admitted that still a team could discuss some negative probabilities together. Participant 4 emphasized the team members’ role in addressing possible negative situations, which could happen in the future. Participant 5 pointed out that it was better to solve the matter when it happened and not to be focused on probability whether some situation occurred or not.

*“If someone predicts then he or she can give advice how to predict If some situation happens, then it is solved. Someone may give advice when notices”. (Participant 4)*

*“...If you focus on negative things which might happen, you might inspire those thoughts...On the contrary, the work of the manager is to focus on positive things, or how to make positive things happen. Of course, there are threats and many of the threats are not in the hands of a team to overcome but it is always good to discuss about new things that are coming, some maybe welcome, some unwelcome, some positive and some negative.” (Participant 6)*

The results of this chapter indicated that Team A regarded a manager or a team leader as playing an important role in proactive problem solving. As far as Team B is concerned, Participant 4 and Participant 5 did not mention a team leader and Participant 6 thought that a manager should not focus on negativity.

#### 4.8 Perceptions and embodiment of “organizational understanding”

The theme of "organizational understanding" is comprised of one sub-theme “honesty and communication” and two category codes: “honesty and transparency is needed”, and “communication helps building understanding”.

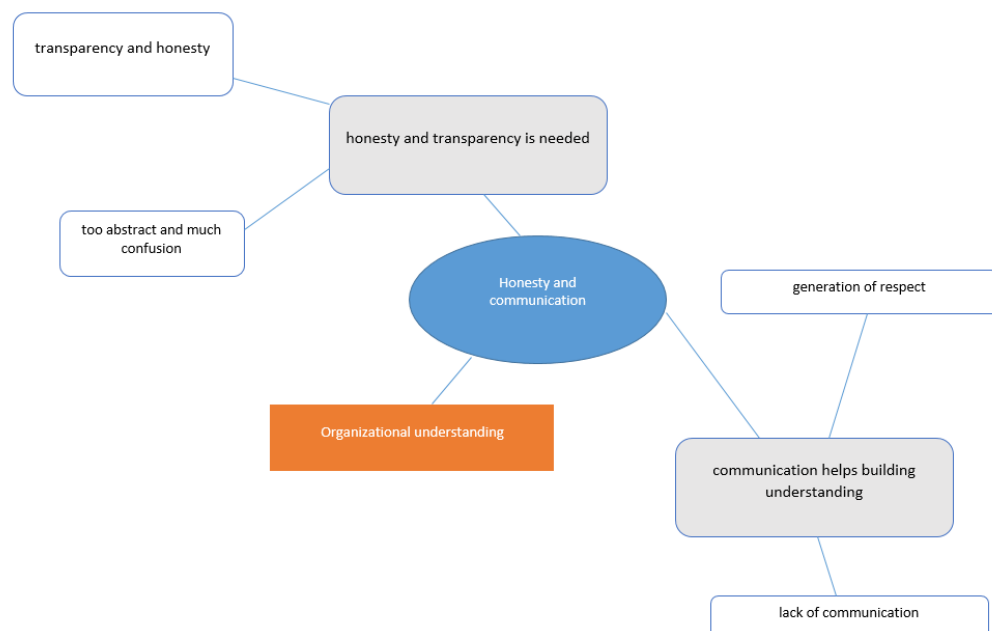


Figure 15. Thematic network on the perceptions and embodiment of “organizational understanding”, made by the author

## Honesty and communication

Participants from Team A expressed different points of view on the need to understand an organization/ a company and other teams. Participant 2 said that there could be two sides in understanding company's goals and needs. On one hand, by realizing company's goals and needs a person might better grasp the whole picture of one's own work, own team. On the other hand, knowing more information might actually make a person less enthusiastic about own work if an employee did not believe or appreciate a company's goal. However, the interviewee summarized that transparency and honesty from the company's side was seen as valuable in any case.

*"If you know the goals of the company your work might be better understandable but it might be also demotivating in case you don't agree with the overall goal or if you think it is a wrong path to take or useless to achieve that goal. It may have both positive and negative outcome. If you know the overall strategy then it's more frank, that is better, because if you know the strategy it's honest, and you may want to leave the company. More information is better, at least you know what you feeling positive or negative about and not just guessing".*  
(Participant 2)

Participant 3 emphasized that a team leader needed to play an active role in making all the team members understand the company's goals and needs. However, on the organizational level a head of a company or some other managerial person in charge would need to contribute to the smooth work between all the teams.

*"This is the job of the big leader to make the whole company working in a synchronized way... who makes the plan for a team, it is a team leader who needs to do".* (Participant 3)

Participant 1 was of the opinion that in the context of their team it was enough to participate once a year in a company's information meeting organized for all the employees. The interviewee did not see much necessity in understanding a company's overall picture.

*"...Once a year to hear about what the company has done, where it is moving. It is for those who are interested".* (Participant 1)

Participant 2 and Participant 3 mentioned that their team was aware of the company's goals but this information was transferred to them in a blur way. Both of

the interviewees would welcome more clear and transparent information. This thought could mean that the organizational factor (including organizational culture) would need to be more visible for the team members in this case. Probably Participant 1 was not much interested in the organizational understanding since neither managers nor organization itself “invested” in that.

*“...Basically we were informed about company goals but it was too abstract sometimes...” (Participant 2)*

*“...Entire environment was such confusion...” (Participant 3)*

Team A members’ mentioned that in principle if some teams worked together with the other teams, then understanding of the other teams should be necessary, however, their team was not interdependent with the other teams, thus they did not require any understanding on the other teams’ needs at all.

*“There was a time when the teams were strictly separated and there was no sharing of information. It didn’t really matter, later some more interactions were, even switching people from one team to another. And it was beneficial for individual people and not really for the work in the team, persons had more experiences but couldn’t straightly apply them in their own team later”. (Participant 2)*

As far as Team B is concerned, Participant 4 underlined that understanding of the other teams’ needs and company’s goals might be only possible in the case of the formed communication. The interviewee noticed that in the end all the teams needed to work to achieve one goal. Communication is the ground on which understanding of the needs is built. Participant 6 also highlighted that active coordination between different teams would contribute to the common goal’s achievement. The interviewee underlined that their team took into account all feedback in order to improve their own work. Participant 5 highlighted that this type of understanding would be needed to generate respect for the people and their work in the different teams.

*“...One needs to understand better the goals of a company. In any company there are many departments and all need to work as one team and when there is no built communication, it’s unclear what other teams do. Every team needs to understand the goals of other teams. The company is like a carriage and one needs to understand what other wheels are doing”. (Participant 4)*

*“...They [team members] need to understand the needs, especially those who work together with them [team members] and they need to understand not in the formal way. That would help to coordinate better with other departments”. “We receive complaints, positive and negative feedback how we are doing, how we coordinate with other departments. It's important to get such feedback since we are working together to achieve the targets. We need to improve how we coordinate with other teams”. (Participant 6)*

*“On everyday schedule, maybe there is no need for that [understanding]. It is important for building the respect for each other, to strengthen the staff and atmosphere...” (Participant 5)*

All participants in Team B underlined that there was a need to strengthen the communication and interactions between the different teams in the company. It would be helpful to fasten accomplishment of some tasks. Work efficiency would grow thanks to the built interaction practices.

Taken together, these results suggested that the context of the teams played a considerable role regarding the team members' organizational understanding and in which forms it occurs in the teams. One could assume that for Team B organizational understanding was of higher relevance in comparison to Team A.

#### 4.9 Perceptions and embodiment of “building external relations”

The theme of “building external relations” is linked to the theme of “organizational understanding”. Only Team B members covered the theme of “building external relations”. The only sub-theme that emerged is the “work efficiency”. Team A members could not give insights to the issue of building external relations since they did not face the need to build them in their work: their team did not depend on the other teams at all. The thematic network below shows the sub-themes' structure.

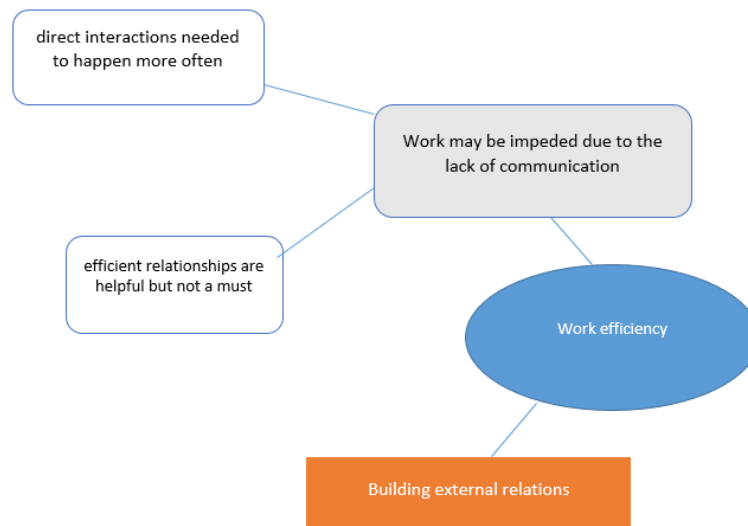


Figure 16. Thematic network on the perceptions and embodiment of “building external relations”, made by the author

### Work efficiency

As mentioned above, only insights from Team B members were covered in this chapter. This sub-theme had much in common with the emerged categories in the organizational understanding theme. Mainly all Team B members showed consensus in their opinions in both understanding of the importance of external relations and their current status of these relationships. Participant 4 pointed out that the communication would be the starting point in building these relationships. The need for the face-to-face interactions like meetings was highlighted. The team members could find some new and more efficient ways to solve some problems through the external relations. Participant 5 was of the same opinion that a lack of the built communication might result in a slower work. The teams needed to be cohesive to reach a common goal.

*“All looks fine but then it turns out that something can be done faster. It can be reached by discussing and communicating... There shall be common meetings, discussions... Mainly all the communication is in emails, no much of direct interactions”. (Participant 4)*

*“...If there are no much of relationships...it impedes the work process...impedes normally...there is a lack of togetherness in this...” (Participant 5)*



Participant 4's and Participant 5's opinions were echoed in Participant 6's point of view as far as the need to have more efficient communication within the teams was concerned. Participant 6 said though that there was not much time resources to dedicate to the working relations with the other departments. Apart from this, Participant 6 noticed that in some cases the aim could be achieved even without having good or efficient relations with the other teams.

*"We need to organize more interactions, the team needs to have more time to interact with other teams... The challenge is to have time for everything..." "The target can be achieved with or without those [efficient relations], though it's positive to have these relationships".*  
(Participant 6)

The results of this chapter suggested that the built communication provided a good basis to make the work of the employees more efficient. The lack of communication, on the contrary, may lead to slower work and different outcomes. The considerable comment was given regarding a lack of time resources to handle the external relationships. This lack of time could be attributed to the organizational factor (organizational structure and culture).

#### 4.10 Answering the research questions

The given results aimed at answering the research question and two sub-questions. Figure 17 represents the research question with the sub-questions.

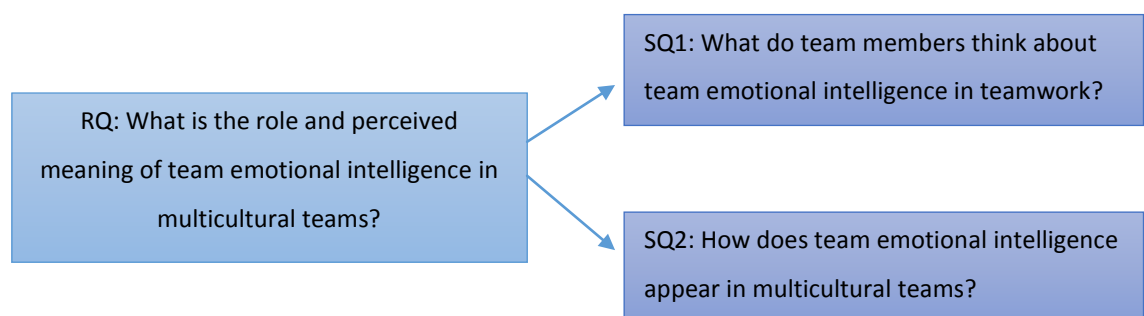


Figure 17. Research question and two sub-questions

Before answering the main research question, the author of the study addresses the sub-questions. The TEI model is comprised of nine norms, thus the answers are provided for each facet.

Table 7. Team members' thoughts on TEI and team emotional intelligence embodiment. Table continues pp. 80-84

<i>Types of norms</i>	<i>SQ1: What do team members think about team emotional intelligence in teamwork?</i>	<i>SQ2: How does team emotional intelligence appear in multicultural teams?</i>
Interpersonal understanding	It is seen as essential facet for the teamwork that enables proactive sharing of information and knowledge. The team members also think that other teammates are humans and everyone is allowed to show the human's weaknesses to some extent. Social awareness is understood as important part of interpersonal understanding. It is not a must to build friendship at work. However, being polite to others should be a must in a good team.	Communication between the team members was smooth without many difficulties despite a cultural diversity. Persons were eager to share knowledge and skills since there was a common understanding that everyone would benefit from it. The team members tried to be aware of the other teammates' moods since everyone understood the importance to be attentive to the other people. However, sometimes the teams also faced situations when information was not shared or the persons did not pay attention to the others' needs.
Confronting members who	This facet is quite sensitive for the team members. The	In some serious situations, discussions between a particular

break norms	<p>team members express opinion that the norm needs to be adjusted to the team members since some of them might feel uncomfortable or feel much stress when facing open confrontation due to a cultural background.</p> <p>Additionally, the interviewees think that the personalities should also be taken into account if this norm is planned to be applied. However, the team members mainly think that the problems need to be addressed and not hidden.</p>	<p>person and a manager were hold. Only serious situations were taken to the manager level. Otherwise, the other forms of any “divergent” behavior were not addressed.</p>
Caring behavior	<p>The team members think that this facet is important and contributes positively to building a healthy team climate. Versatile opinions on the work-related aspects need to be valued. The other non-work related issues could be discussed if the team members feel so; however, there might be a risk to initiate a conflict situation. Thus, the team members need to have good communication skills in order</p>	<p>Support was natural in both teams, though the level of support was different. The forms of support also differed. In one team the informational, emotional and instrumental support was present and in the other team the instrumental support prevailed. In both teams work-related opinions were listened to. Additionally, the opinions on the work-related issues also appeared in one of the teams and the teammates mainly</p>

	to drive out from the sensitive discussions.	behaved in a respectful way.
Team self-evaluation	The team members express opinions that the team self-evaluation is needed when a situation requires so, for example the cycles of work, new clients etc. There is no need for the evaluation if everything works fine.	In one of the teams self-evaluation happened naturally on a weekly basis during the normal meetings. However, only some team members were eager to give a feedback on the team performance and others were more passive during those meetings. This type of team self-evaluation was not seen as very efficient though. In the other team, the self-evaluation did not happen regularly, only occasionally and mainly in the form of one-on-one discussions.
Creating resources for working with emotion	The team members consider that negative emotions need to be addressed since they may be destructive. Mainly persons think that organization and not the team itself needs to provide the resources. However, some team members consider that emotions could be addressed just by some daily one-on-one talks when it is appropriate and no other resources are needed.	One of the team faced the situations when special time was organized to handle negative-related aspects, which could happen in the company. The resources were organized by a higher management. The other team did not provide in detail any concrete practical answers for this facet.

Creating an affirmative environment	The team members give opinion that fair treatment, certainty and sense of humor contribute to a positive environment inside a team.	The higher management was expected to participate in the positive environment maintenance. One of the teams said that sometimes persons were not acknowledged for their work, which in the end affected attitudes towards the management negatively. It was also underlined that give-backs or other types of appreciation were not popular both in the team and the company. The other team had a common sense of humor that kept the team positive. Other forms of creating an affirmative environment were not mentioned.
Proactive problem solving	Some team members think that a team leader needs to take active part in predicting some unwelcome situations. Others do not concentrate on a need to proactively solve issues and prefer to cope with the issues when they occur.	In one of the teams, proactive problem solving was a “task” of a team leader or some other managers, mainly problems were anticipated through a risk analysis. The other team did not have any particular ways how to proactively address the problems since the team did not see it as crucially important.
Organizational understanding	Some team members do not find it extremely important to understand the needs,	One of the teams did not clearly realize the goals and needs of the whole company since it was not

	goals etc. of a company or an organization and add that the high management needs to be active in bringing the organizational understanding to the teams. However, the other persons express opinions that organizational understanding contributes to a positive atmosphere and efficient communication among different teams.	communicated to them properly enough. Additionally, the team members were not eager themselves to build organizational understanding. The other team faced a lack of organizational understanding since communication within the teams was not fully developed. However, the team members in this team were eager to improve the understanding.
Building external relations	Some team members could not give thoughts about this facet since it was not needed in their team. Others consider the norm to be very important since it improves the work efficiency.	One of the teams did not comment the facet since the team members did not need any boundary relationships. The other team needed to foster the building of the relations since it could have a positive effect on their work.

*What is the role and perceived meaning of team emotional intelligence in multicultural teams?*

The research question is comprised of two parts: a role of team emotional intelligence in multicultural teams and perceived meaning of team emotional intelligence in these teams. Thus, the answers are to be given for each part of the research question.

In accordance to the Cambridge dictionary, a role can be defined as “the position or purpose that someone or something has in a situation, organization, society, or relationship” (Cambridge University Press 2018a). The findings have shown that not

all norms of TEI are relevant or important for a teamwork in accordance to the research participants. From the individual level norms, interpersonal understanding and caring behavior played more important role than the norm of confronting members who break team norms. These norms contributed positively to the cooperation inside one of the teams, serious challenges linked to a cultural diversity did not appear. It was highlighted that politeness could be seen as a standard in a team. None of the team level norms had much relevance in the teams and the team members mainly considered that the higher management needed to participate in facilitation of these norms' formation. As far as the cross-boundary norms are concerned, in one team they were not required due to the work context and in another team they were highly relevant since they were needed to improve the team's work efficiency.

The other part of the research question refers to a perceived meaning of TEI in the multicultural teams. A perception is "a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem" (Cambridge University Press. 2018b). A meaning is "...what it expresses or represents" (Cambridge University Press. 2018c). Thus, a perceived meaning of TEI would be standing for the team members' opinions on the contents or representation of TEI. Table 8 below provides a summary of the perceived meanings provided by the participants.

Table 8. Perceived meanings on TEI provided by the participants. Table continues pp. 85-86

Interpersonal understanding	Information and knowledge sharing; sharing personal interests; letting out emotions is human and needs to be accepted in a team to some agreed extent; knowing the moods of others.
Confronting members who break norms	A cultural diversity and appropriateness of confrontation need to be carefully evaluated. Preference to address confrontation in the form of

	one-on-one discussions.
Caring behavior	Sharing, empathy, feedback and acknowledgement. The team members in the multicultural teams need to have good social skills in order to address delicate and sensitive issues.
Team self-evaluation	Team self-evaluation could be handled during regular meetings but it needs to be efficient. If the same people speak up all the time, others are not heard. Other alternative would be one-on-one discussions.
Creating resources for working with emotion	Discussions are not enough, some practical implications need to be found for solving serious issues like burn-out, dissatisfaction of the employees.
Creating an affirmative environment	A positive environment could be created through the organizational factors, by creating certainty and safety, acknowledgement for hard work. Additionally, sense of humor is important, which is in the hands of the team members' themselves.
Proactive problem solving	The team leaders or a higher management needs to be proactive. A risk analysis could be applied in some cases to eliminate the risks. Others perceive that there is no need to be much proactive.
Organizational understanding	The company is like a "carriage" and one needs to understand what the other "wheels" do. It is important for building the respect for each other, to strengthen the staff and atmosphere.
Building external relations	Work efficiency is dependent on the boundary management.

Taken together, some norms of TEI were perceived and seen as important in the teamwork. Others were seen as less relevant. Possibly, this could be partly



understood through a cultural diversity. Team A managed to address a cultural diversity through interpersonal understanding, caring behavior. Team B apparently did not face any crucial or serious issues as far as differences in cultures were concerned. Some more elaborations on the impact of a cultural diversity are given in Chapter 5. Apparently, both studied teams have already developed their own team cultures, which partly included TEI. These already developed types of team cultures served the needs of the studied teams to some extent. The question, which was not asked in this study, concerns efficiency. This means that the thesis neither addressed the social capital issues nor evaluated the efficiency levels of the teams, and thus it is impossible to answer whether a cultural diversity was addressed in the most optimal way in order to gain all the benefits, which it could bring.

#### 4.11 Verification of the results

Verification of the findings include four tests or checks: credibility (synonym of internal validity), transferability (synonym of external validity or generalizability), dependability (synonym of reliability), and confirmability (synonym to objectivity) (Shenton 2004, 64).

##### *Credibility (internal validity)*

Triangulation is often employed as a technique that ensures the study's credibility (ibid., 65). In the current study, triangulation of data sources and site triangulation were applied. Triangulation of data sources means that different participants need to take part in the study (ibid., 66). In this study three participants were involved from each team, which gave a possibility to compare different points of view on TEI. The structured interviews allowed comparing the data in a systematic order. Site triangulation means that the persons from different organizations are welcome to contribute to the research; this approach can eliminate the "bias" of one organization (ibid.). The present thesis has involved the teams, which operated in two different companies. This approach showed that the context of the companies had impact on the team members' perceptions, but in the same time enriched the received data. Taken together, triangulation contributed to gathering enough data to answer the research questions.

### *Transferability (external validity)*

External validity can be defined as a possibility to generalize the findings from the research to some other contexts. In principle, qualitative research does not focus on generalizability in comparison to quantitative research. (Leung 2015.) It means that qualitative research aims at depicting some phenomenon in its particular context. Mason (2002, 1) though mentions that within qualitative research it is still possible to make “cross-contextual generalities”.

As far as this study is concerned, it may have some generalizability. On one hand, similar findings could be received in the other multicultural teams concerning the perceptions of TEI or some of its facets. For example, it was noted that the “confrontation norm” was a delicate matter in both studied teams. On the other hand, the context of the companies in which teams operate, the size of the teams, tasks’ peculiarities, and the team members’ cultural origins may have their particular effects on the way how TEI may appear. For instance, the cross-boundary norms were needed only in one of the teams due to the characteristics of their work. These suggestions could be justified through the fact that the norms themselves cannot work through a “copy-paste” principle and each team would need to adjust them to its own context.

### *Dependability (reliability)*

Yin (1994, 36) mentions that reliability means that the same case study can be conducted by some other person and the same findings would be obtained. However, there is heavy critique concerning the attributes of qualitative research’s reliability. The reason for that could be a phenomenon’s change or some evolvement. (Shenton 2004, 71.) As far as the present study is concerned, the author may admit that the TEI phenomenon in the studied teams may change in some period of time due to many factors and the data received later may differ from the present one, which is especially relevant for the team which still works together.

Silverman (2015, 150) points out that interview studies’ reliability may be supported through recording the interviews, making transcriptions of the interviews, providing “long extracts of data” in the findings. The author followed the suggestion:

interviews were recorded and transcribed personally. In the data analysis chapter the interpretations were supported with quite long quotations and the thematic networks were provided for better understanding how the sub-themes were generated.

### *Confirmability (objectivity)*

In order to show confirmability of one's study, a researcher may indicate the shortcomings in the employed methods and possible impact of these shortcomings on the study (Shenton 2004, 73). As far as present study is concerned, there might be shortcomings, which are concerned with the chosen approach, where the interview was structured and the questions followed the TEI model. The structured interview lacks the flexibility and, thus, there is a probability that the received data was scoped in accordance to the asked questions. The study could have been planned as more inductive one without the direct usage of the theory model and the in-depth interview could have been employed. The author aimed at eliminating any personal bias, however, there still might be a possibility that the author's own understanding of TEI affected the questions asked in the interviews.

The sample was purposive and focused on the culturally diverse persons who gained the teamwork experience in the multicultural teams. The present study did not focus in its interpretation on the differences in gender, age or working years in the company. However, it is possible that age and gender could have influenced the received data in addition to the differences in the cultural backgrounds. As it has been pointed out in Chapter 3, age of the interviewees ranged from 30-50 years, which can be referred to as the generational differences. Thus, both types of generations, namely generation X and generation Y (millennials), were present in the study. However, the present thesis did not provide a direct age and gender composition due to the confidentiality reasons discussed in Chapter 3. The generational dissimilarities possibly may have influenced the way people perceived their teamwork.

The gender differences may have their own role in the perceptions as well. Women tend to believe in the team members' abilities more than men do. Apart from that,

men tend to have much higher confidence (overconfidence) in own skills in comparison to women. (Kuhn & Villeval 2013, 23.) All these features may have their own effect on the people's beliefs regarding the teamwork in addition to their cultural background.

## 5 Discussion

The present study focused on understanding the phenomenon of team emotional intelligence as team culture in the context of the multicultural teams. Initially the team emotional intelligence model was created by Druskat and Wolff (2001), the model consists of nine norms. Druskat and Wolff also developed a tool to estimate the team emotional intelligence norms, team fundamentals and social capital. The tool is called Team Emotional Intelligence Survey. This survey provides scores for different aspects of TEI, an example of the sample report is available on Teamcoachingzone website (GEI Partners 2013). The present study, however, employs the qualitative research methods and does not aim at estimating TEI in the teams with scores, instead of that research concentrates on the points of view of the interviewees on TEI. The main objective is to get a holistic understanding of the team emotional intelligence's role in the studied multicultural teams and to learn about the informants' perceptions on the phenomenon.

In order to reach the objective, one research question (RQ) with two sub-questions (SQ) were formulated as follows:

*RQ: What is the role and perceived meaning of team emotional intelligence in multicultural teams?*

*SQ1: What do team members think about team emotional intelligence in teamwork?*

*SQ2: How does team emotional intelligence appear in multicultural teams?*

This study can be defined as abductive: the research questions and the interview questions were formulated through the theory and the data analysis was approached inductively through the thematic analysis. The inductive thematic analysis allowed

discovering some new insights on the issues, which related to team emotional intelligence.

The findings of the research showed that some TEI facets were seen as more relevant and important than the other facets. Additionally, some facets were embodied in some different way than the TEI model suggested.

## 5.1 Comparing results with literature

In this chapter the findings on TEI are discussed and compared with the theory. The author does not aim at pointing out particular teams and tries to give the overall picture. The only exception would be the cross-boundary norms, and the reason for that could be found in the teams' work differences.

**Interpersonal understanding:** the findings showed that the understanding of this facet by the interviewed team members was close to the meaning of the facet in the TEI model. However, it needs to be admitted that the structured interview possibly did not allow revealing all thoughts of the team members, thus the conclusions were derived and restricted by the received data. The results also pointed out that the visible part of organizational culture (an open office space provided by the company and the standardized communication system) actually played an important role in building the ground for communication, which also contributed positively to the facet of interpersonal understanding. Thanks to the system, it was easier for the team members to involve in active sharing of information and opinions. This finding is in line with suggestions made by Sağ, Kaynak and Sezen (2016, 66-68) on the driving factors, with the organizational factor as the basement for the other factors including team culture. In this sense, the visible part of organizational culture might have eliminated any serious problems connected with a cultural diversity.

**Confronting members who break norms:** the results revealed that this norm was quite sensitive for many informants. Only the most serious cases of a "divergent" behavior were addressed. This finding can be possibly explained by the suggestion of Druskat and Wolff (2006, 4-5) who outline that confrontation is always challenging and needs to be approached in the right way. Additionally, a cultural diversity is highlighted in the results through direct and indirect confrontation, which is

discussed by Behfar, Kern, and Brett (2006, 239). However, the results did not provide any example, which type of norms might have been broken and which type of behavior was seen as “non-compliant”.

**Caring behavior:** the findings on this facet revealed that the team members perceived sharing of information, knowledge, empathy, feedback and acknowledgement to be of high relevance in the teamwork. Thus, the versatile forms of support were mentioned, which is aligned with the team TEI model (Wolff 2006, 2). Respecting as such can also belong to the norm of caring behavior. The findings showed that respecting the non-work related opinions was more challenging and required good social skills in the multicultural teams. Definitely, the persons at work are not forced to discuss so much other issues but it may still happen due to the human nature. This thought is in line with Antal and Friedman (2005, 72) who underline the risks of conflicts due to the different views.

Taken together, the individual level norms reflect to some extent the essence of the TEI model. The findings showed that a cultural diversity influenced the facet of confrontation and caring behavior as far as the respect issue was concerned. The interpersonal understanding facet did not reveal any considerable aspects related to a cultural diversity.

**Team self-evaluation:** the findings gained from one of the teams indicated that a team evaluated its own performance and moods quite regularly. This is in line with the team self-evaluation norm in the TEI model (Wolff 2006, 2). The issue of efficiency of this evaluation was underlined by the participants though. One of the points was that not all the team members were active in speaking up since not every team member was confident to reflect his or her own opinion in front of a big team. This matter could be possibly explained through the implicit and explicit communication styles (Behfar et al. 2006, 245), the high-context and low-context cultures (Hall 1989, 91). Additionally, in the situation when not every team member could contribute to the evaluation due to shyness etc., the team itself could have influenced the way how a feedback is obtained. This would probably enhanced the team self-evaluation efficiency. As Druskat and Wolff (2001, 86) highlight: “Group emotional intelligence is about... asking a quiet member for his/her thoughts...”

**Creating resources for working with emotions:** The finding revealed that team members relied on the leaders or a higher management to organize special discussions and the other resources to handle negative emotions. In this sense, the finding showed that the facet was partly understood somewhat differently than the original TEI model suggested; the model implies that team members themselves are active in the creation of the resources. However, the organization of the resources as such is in line with Wolff, Druskat, Koman, and Messer (2006, 235) with their reference to Levy (1984) who claims that people need to address emotions; otherwise, they might be suppressed. However, apart from the resources being organized by the management, the persons also addressed emotions during regular meetings, expressed their thoughts, however, there appeared the comment that in addition to discussions some other measures needed to be taken as well. It might mean that emotions related to some situations and these situations needed to be adjusted but apparently it did not happen. This finding is probably linked to the managerial factor, which may influence team culture, outlined by Sağ et al. (2016, 66-68). That means that a manager needed to participate in taking the measures.

**Creating an affirmative environment:** this facet is linked to the previous norm, the finding was in some way close in the meaning that the management needed to participate in building an affirmative environment through providing certainty, giving promotion etc. which reflected the managerial factor in accordance to Sağ et al. (ibid.). However, in addition to that, sense of humor was highlighted in the findings. It means that the team members were active themselves in the creation of a positive environment around them, which is in line with the TEI model (Wolff 2006, 3).

**Proactive problem solving:** this facet also resembles the findings from the previous two norms, creating resources for working with emotion and creating an affirmative environment, showing that a team leader or a manager needs to be proactive in finding solutions.

Taken together, the author of the study might assume that some cultural dimensions might have influenced the perceptions of the informants concerning creation of the resources for working with emotion, creation of an affirmative environment and finding solutions proactively. There might be a probability that such dimension as

“power distance” (Hofstede 2011, 8) might explain why the opinions about the team leaders’ or management role was emphasized in three norms: the national cultures of the majority of informants scored high in the dimension of power distance. It might mean that informants felt that this type of matters should be taken care by the persons with more “power” in the team or in the organization. This thought can be treated as an assumption though, since interviewees provided no direct comments about the reasons behind.

**Organizational understanding and building external relationships:** the finding revealed that this facet was fully needed only in one of the teams. The IT team was quite neutral in their desire to build both of these norms. The differences in the work types might explain the attitudes. The IT team was not interdependent with other teams whereas the sales team was dependent on the other teams and, thus, considered these norms to be relevant. In this sense, the perceptions of the sales team are aligned with the essence of the norms in the TEI model (Wolff 2006, 3).

Taken together, the author of the thesis might assume that a cultural diversity had its own influence on the perceptions of the particular TEI norms in the studied teams. Thus, it might be possible to believe that not all TEI norms were “functioning” in the essence of the TEI theory in the teams. The TEI norms aim at bringing the team and its teamwork to the efficiency levels meaning that without them the teams can also operate and function. The other assumption might be that the studied teams developed their own team cultures with the other norms, which were not revealed in this study. This thought is in line with Early and Mosakowski (2000, 27) who suggest that teams might develop own team cultures from close features of the team members or alternatively create some other norms. “Every group has norms, whether they’re developed consciously or not. A great example is: Do we start on time or do we wait for latecomers? Is it okay to show up late? Norms vary from group to group, and depend on what’s agreed upon by all involved” (Druskat n.d.). Thus, the norms as such may have different characteristics, they may be positive or not (ibid.) TEI as team culture is multi-sided and embraces in accordance to its creators, Druskat and Wolff (2001), constructive norms.



## 5.2 Practical implications

It needs to be noted that the model of TEI is still in its development. Academicians have started to study the model and some companies have implemented the model. (Team Emotional Intelligence with Vanessa Druskat and Daniel Goleman n.d.) In this sense, it was unrealistic to expect that all the facets would be perceived by the interviewees in accordance to the essence of the TEI model. The study concentrated on giving a holistic picture on the team members' perceptions and the way of TEI's occurrence in the teams. This research could give some insights how actually TEI is perceived and which norms are embodied and practiced in the teams and which norms are not seen as relevant in the studied teams' context. The reason behind these perceptions may be hidden in a cultural diversity. When a multicultural team is planned to be formed or already is formed and functions, a team leader needs to be aware of such phenomenon as team culture. A cultural diversity needs to be thought when the norms are in the process of formation. The norms of interpersonal understanding, however, may help to eliminate serious interpersonal conflicts, which could arise due to a range of reasons linked to a cultural diversity (misunderstandings due to language, stereotyping etc.). All persons despite their cultural backgrounds may adjust the confrontation norm in such a way that all the team members would accept the norm and feel comfortable to face confrontation. Additionally, the team level norms may be influenced by the cultural dimensions of the team members' national cultures, thus, it might be useful to keep this notice in mind in the multicultural teams. Taking into consideration the above-mentioned suggestions, the present study could be relevant for the team leaders in the multicultural teams, HR departments who could learn some new ideas from the embodied model. Multicultural start-up companies may find this research relevant since team culture is important in turbulent development of rapidly growing companies.

This study might shed some new light for both team leaders and team members on facing existent problems in the multicultural teams. If the problems occur and they have permanent character, they could be gradually addressed by coining the norms. For example, if the team members are not active in the team self-evaluation, proactive problem solving etc. possibly due to the cultural backgrounds, with time it might be possible to coin the norms where the team members would be inspired to

participate. Definitely, the formation of the norms would need the effort, dedication and commitment from different sides such as a team leader, the team members and even HR.

The present study might also be relevant for those who hold the higher managerial positions since it partly opens up the importance of organizational culture for team culture functioning. Team culture needs some kind of nutrition from the organizational side. This study could possibly empower the HR departments to facilitate the team culture's norms formation through organization of trainings and some other in-house activities to improve interpersonal understanding, team self-evaluation etc. However, these trainings needs to be felt as needed and relevant by the team members, the management etc. and not perceived as a must or something non-relevant.

### 5.3 Limitations of the research

Every research faces an issue of limitations. This study also encountered a few limitations. One of the limitations is linked to the bias of the thesis' author. Possibly this bias still impacted to some extent the way how the whole team emotional model was understood and perceived that could be presumably reflected in the posed interview questions. Apart from that, the present study did not focus on the stages of the team development, which were introduced by Tuckman (forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning) as far as the studied teams were concerned. However, the stage of the team's development may influence the way how team members behave and feel, which difficulties they may face on both individual and team level. Likewise, the study did not point out on what stage of norms' formation the teams were located.

Additionally, the present thesis did not concentrate on the organizational structures and organizational cultures of the companies in which the teams operated. As pointed out, the organizational factor influences team cultures to some extent. Thus, more insights on the organizational culture could have been opened up.

Moreover, the study did not cover the leadership and followership styles of the team members, which could have influenced the interpretation of the received data. The

thesis did not study in detail the effect of cultural intelligence, tasks' interdependence and informational diversity in the teams, which may have their impact on team culture.

#### 5.4 Recommendations for future research

As stated in the introduction, the present study aimed at understanding team culture in the form of TEI. Thus, the recommendations for future research are derived from the study's shortcomings and limitations and represent different possibilities to conduct future research. The first recommendation is to conduct the research from some other epistemological-ontological angle (for example, interpretivism) and employ more inductive approach with in-depth interview as a data collection method. This would probably mean that a predetermined theoretical model could not be applied. Alternatively, instead of the in-depth interviews a participant observation could be employed. It would allow having deep insights from real behaviors of the team members and through this approach the meaning of particular team culture could be constructed.

The second recommendation would be to include into a future research such "variables" as age and gender and see if new meanings and interpretations on team culture appear in relation to age and gender differences.

The third recommendation is connected to the team stage development coined by Tuckman. The future qualitative research could interpret team culture through the stage development of a multicultural team. Alternatively, one could study how the team emotional intelligence norms develop in a team by applying a four stage-process, which was described in the literature review chapter.

The forth recommendation would be to view team culture of a multicultural team through the organizational culture. The present study has covered some aspects, which relate to organizational culture in both the literature review and findings. However, still there seems to be a possibility to explore team culture from the organizational perspective in more detail.

The fifth recommendation would relate to the leadership and followership styles within a multicultural team. A study could be conducted by studying the leadership style of a team leader and understanding what effect it has on the whole team culture. Additionally, followership style of the team members could be additionally taken into account when addressing team culture.

The last recommendation would be to keep the current research design and change the sample approach. One could study the multicultural teams from one industry or one type like sales teams, R&D teams etc. These types of teams may have their own specific sub-cultures despite of a cultural diversity.

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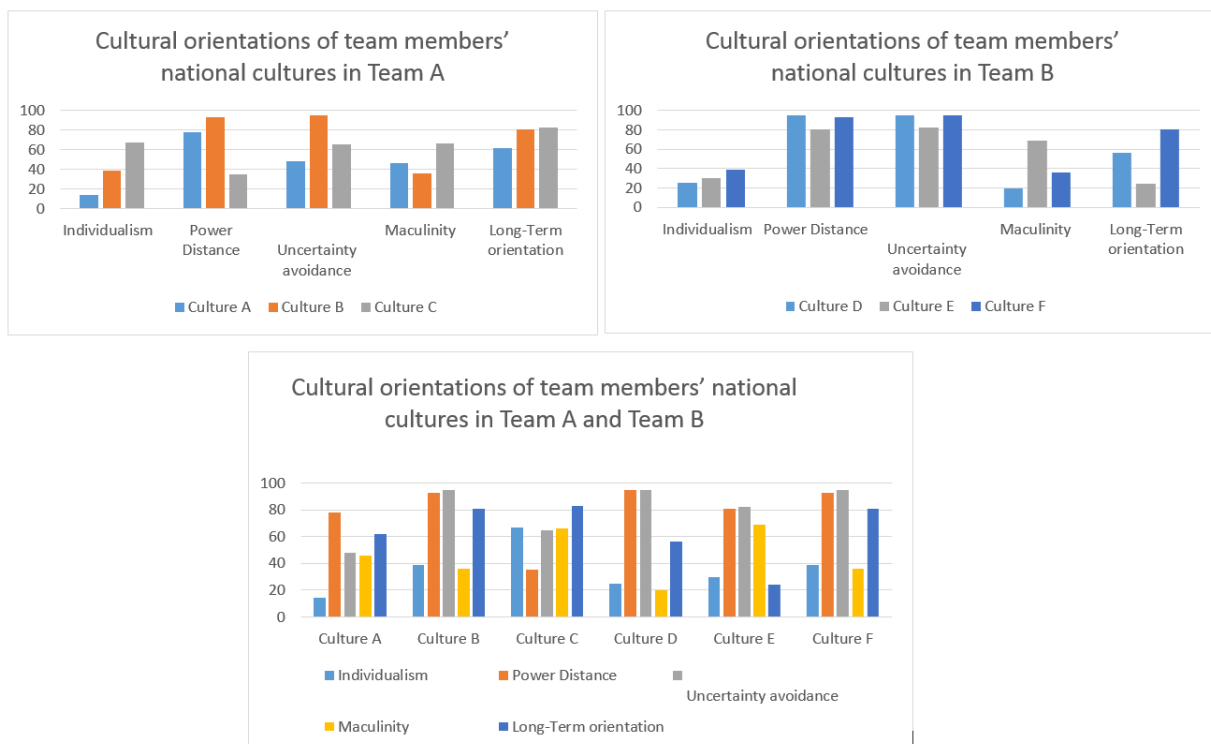
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## Appendices

**Appendix 1.** The cultural dimensions of individualism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity, long-term orientation based on Hofstede’s cultural dimensions model Team A and Team B, made by the author (the scores obtained from Country Comparison Tool (Hofstede Insights 2018))



## Appendix 2. Interview guide

### Perceptions and embodiment of “interpersonal understanding”:

Could you please briefly describe the communication within your team?

Do team members, in your opinion, need to share information and feelings between each other? How this sharing can occur?

Do you think it is important to understand team members’ moods in general? Why do you think so?

Do you think there is a need to improve communication within your team? Why do you think so? How communication can be improved?

### Perceptions and embodiment of “confronting members who break norms”:

Is it important to discuss together as a team about situations when some team member acted in a somewhat disruptive or unacceptable way for the whole team? Why/ why not? Do you use these practices in your team?

### Perceptions and embodiment of “caring behavior”:

Do you think team members need to give support to each other? Why/why not?

Have you ever recognized that your team member needed help? How did you understand that?

Shall be diverse opinions respected in a team/teamwork in general? How this respect needs to be shown in your opinion?

In which ways this support occurs in your team? Are diverse opinions supported in your team? How?

#### **Perceptions and embodiment of “team self-evaluation”:**

Does the team in general need to discuss, in your opinion, its strengths and weaknesses regularly regarding interactions between team members and team goals, tasks’ accomplishments etc.? Why/why not?

Does your team discuss about its strengths and weaknesses? How? Do you find these discussions useful?

#### **Perceptions and embodiment of “creating resources for working with emotion”:**

Does the team need to provide special resources for its members (e.g. time) to talk openly about members’ emotions related to work situations? Why/why not?

Does your team have resources to discuss about emotions, which occur in your team?

#### **Perceptions and embodiment of “creating an affirmative environment”:**

In your opinion, is it important for a team to stay in a positive mood under difficult circumstances? If yes, what can make a team stay in a positive mood?

How can you characterize your team regarding its positivity under challenging circumstances?

#### **Perceptions and embodiment of “proactive problem solving”:**

In your opinion, does a team need to address unwelcome work-related problems proactively?

Do you think that your team can predict unwelcome work-related issues? How?

Has any team member stayed with some difficult work-related issue alone without help of other team members in your team? If yes, why?

#### **Perceptions and embodiment of “organizational understanding”:**

Do you think it is important for a team to understand the needs and goals of the whole company and those of other teams/departments? Why?

Does your team, in your opinion, understand the above-mentioned needs and goals? Why do you think so?

Does your team get constructive external feedback from the other teams/departments? Why/why not? Is it important to get such feedback for a team?

#### **Perceptions and embodiment of “building external relations”:**

Is it important for a team to have effective relationships with other teams/departments? Why/why not?

How does your team deal with other teams within a company? Can you characterize these relationships as effective? Why/why not? What shall be done to improve them?

### Appendix 3. Example on finding the initial codes (Level 1 codes) in the data

It is not necessary to understand but when you work with people for some time then	
you start to guess in which mood the person is. When the person is in a bad mood it's	
better to wait and ask later or ask someone else. Or maybe vice a versa there is a need	
to come to this person more often to comfort this person. It is more like individual way.	
Some people didn't care so much about the moods. The main qualities were	
professional, how quick you accomplish the work and with which quality. Though some	
managers paid attention to that when the work accomplishment was not done on time.	

social awareness

more support can be given if a person is in

differences in social awareness levels

hard skills are more appreciated

Differences in social awareness

**Appendix 4.** A matrix representing the category codes (Level 2 codes) and the sub-themes generated from them (Level 3 codes). The category codes were highlighted in accordance to the colors of the initial Level 1 codes (after marking the Level 1 codes in the margins of the Word documents, the codes were transferred to a separate document where similar codes were attributed some colors, which helped to generate the Level 2 codes). Highlighting was needed for the traceability reasons.

Pre-set themes	Level 2 codes = category codes		Level 3 codes = Sub-themes
	Team A	Team B	
Interpersonal understanding	Established processes Social awareness The role of managers	Social awareness Responsibilities and communication	Established processes and communication (Established processes Responsibilities and communication) Social awareness (Social awareness Social awareness Role of a team leader)
Confronting members who break norms	Finding solutions together Cultural differences	Eliminating stress	Finding team consensus (Finding solutions together Eliminating stress Cultural differences)
Caring behavior	Sharing, acknowledgement and empathy Opinions on work-related issues Other opinions	Feedback and acknowledgement	Healthy climate in a team through sharing, empathy, feedback and acknowledgement (Sharing, acknowledgement and empathy Feedback and acknowledgement) Work-related opinions easier to respect (Opinions on work-related issues Other opinions)
Team self-evaluation	New team needs to have evaluation Team self-evaluation efficiency Tasks' dynamics	One-on-one meetings vs. team discussions Tasks' dynamics	One-on-one meetings vs. form of teamwork (Fresh team needs to have team self-evaluation Team self-evaluation efficiency Tasks' dynamics One-on-one meetings vs. team discussions Tasks' dynamics)
Creating resources for working with emotion	Meetings are good but actions need to be taken afterwards	Negative emotions create stress	Discussions are good but actions need to be taken afterwards (Meetings are good but actions need to be taken afterwards Negative emotions create stress)
Creating an affirmative environment	Fair treatment and acknowledgement	Sense of humor Certainty	Fair treatment, certainty and sense of humor (Fair treatment and acknowledgement Sense of humor Certainty)
Proactive problem solving	Eliminating risks, risk analysis, being open	Team members' role	Role of a team leader (Eliminating risks, risk analysis, being open Team members' role)
Organizational understanding	Honesty and transparency is needed	Communication helps building understanding	Honesty and communication (Honesty and transparency is needed)

			Communication helps building understanding)
Building external relations	---	Work may be impeded due to the lack of communication	Work efficiency